

NON-PROFIT PUNK ROCK

RAZZORCAKE

WE DO OUR PART

#117

♥ Myriam Gurba



The Dumpies

Bad Moves

Patrick Kindlon

One Punk's
Guide to
John Waters



MARINAOMI
& G. CORDNER

PLEASED YOUTH

THE DOOMSDAY ALBUM

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1984
DEMOS

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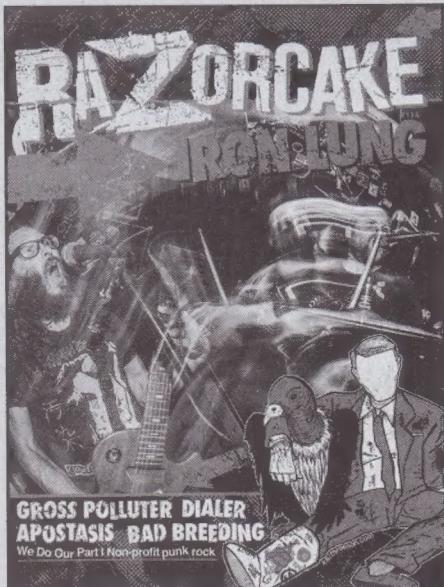
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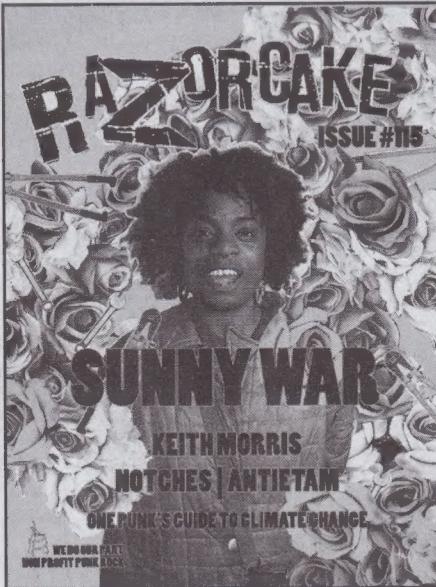
RAZORCAKE is a magazine dedicated to DIY punk, independent culture, and amplifying unheard voices. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, we're sustained by subscriptions, donations, advertisements, and grants. All support is greatly appreciated. We feel when we work together, life is a little more bearable. On one side is a terrifying culture of manipulation, and on the other side are all of us.

Anyone has the potential to be a Razorcake contributor. If you don't see or hear what you'd like covered, lend us a helping hand. If you're knowledgeable about DIY punk, are open to the editing of your work, can meet deadlines, and follow instructions, we'll consider your contribution. All creative content is done on a volunteer basis. Razorcake does not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or ableist bullshit—and we've held these ethics since our start in 2001. DIY punk can't be fully captured, understood, or expressed by white men. Diversity makes us a better punk organization. We're encouraging people who are marginalized—by ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and personal experience—to submit material to Razorcake. Let's work with each other.

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Get out the Mortar, We're Building Something Here

I get things done with a brick-by-brick approach, treating something big as a collection of smaller parts. I got the idea from an old issue of *Cometbus*. Aaron was talking about how big cities are really just a bunch of small towns stuck together. That stayed with me, and I've been thinking about bricks ever since.

A half-marathon isn't a thirteen-mile slog, it's a few weeks of four-mile training runs. A novel isn't a couple hundred pages, it's writing a couple pages a hundred times. Each run or writing session is me making a brick and attaching it to something bigger. I can make a brick. I can stack a bunch of bricks and build something. I gain confidence.

I'm a black person living in the United States, so that confidence was hard-won and has been slipping away for years. In 2013, I was finishing my first novel *Zero Fade*, about a seventh-grader's misconceptions of adulthood and masculinity, when Trayvon Martin's murderer was acquitted of all charges. I remember crying in a Chicago restaurant, wondering what brick I could make that would eventually stack up against the centuries of white supremacy that provide a foundation to this country.

While writing *Black Card*, a novel about the microaggressions experienced by "the black friend" in a group of white punks, I watched the police who murdered Tamir Rice, Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and more walk free. I was trying to put my bricks together, but the police, the Democrats, and the Republicans had already built a haunted fortress. I started to look at bricks differently. They're for throwing, too.

I'm writing this in June 2020, while Black Lives Matter protests are popping off in all fifty states. The movement has gained surprising traction as it has become impossible for anyone to close their eyes to

racism and police abuse. I feel like we're working toward something, that these bricks will crack windows, skulls, and traditions, making room to build something new.

Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and Breonna Taylor are bricks, perfect examples of what this country thinks of black people. A flaming police cruiser is a brick too, showing the people who kill us that they are also up against something big. A person marching is a brick. So is talking about what it means to abolish the police.

We're making bricks at *Razorcake*. Aside from the occasional mosquito, you can't smash anything with an issue of our magazine, and we're okay with that. We make one of these mags every two months, and this is the 117th time we've done it. The end result isn't a stack of magazines. The end result is all of the people who've found a copy of *Razorcake* and felt like they weren't alone, who felt like there was a place for them, like they could join others and do something, too.

I'm one of those people. Punk has been my lifeline since I was a teenager, giving me a sense of purpose and belonging that the world at large is not willing to provide. It let me know I wasn't crazy for believing things are stacked against people who have less. I started writing for *Razorcake* in 2006, when I was done playing in bands, but looking for a way to keep creative, stay connected, and be reminded I'm not alone when I'm traveling the deepest corners of my brain. It helped. I hope this magazine helps you, too.

This issue goes out to all of the bricks who found community in a DIY scene, and are now using that sense of empowerment to knock things down and build something better.

—Chris L. Terry

Cover by MariNaomi, marinaomi.com
Photo by Geoff Cordner, geoffcordner.com

Racism in America is like dust in the air. It seems invisible—even if you're choking on it—until you let the sun in. Then you see it's everywhere. As long as we keep shining that light, we have a chance of cleaning it wherever it lands. But we have to stay vigilant, because it's always still in the air.

—Kareem Abdul-Jabbar

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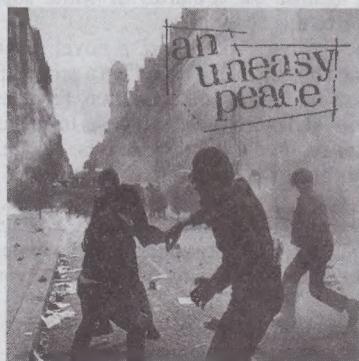
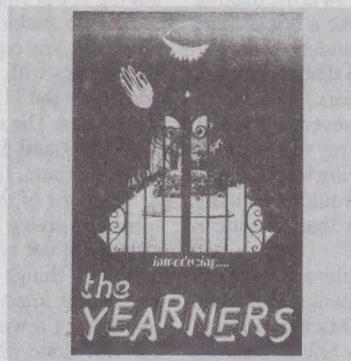
THANK YOU: *Black Lives Matter. AskBiGriz in lavender to the front! It weirdly felt like we were keeping secrets from Myriam as Mari illustrated this cover, but it was for a good cause; Thanks to Geoff Cordner, via Myriam, for the source portrait photo for the cover; Remember when stuff like satanic conspiracies felt like bad/great heavy metal videos and no one got hurt in the fantasy? Those days are gone. Thanks to Bone Dust for Donna's illo.; Defund the police, justice for George Floyd, Fuck 12 thanks to Bill Pinkel for Jim's illo.; File down the teeth in your gears to make the machine slip thanks to Brad Beshaw for Sean's illo.; Sickness was freedom. School was the machine that ground up and dulled our minds thanks to Mitch Clem and Amanda Kirk for Nerb's illo.; Nazis burned books. Books can, in turn, crush white supremacy ideology thanks to Jackie Rusted for Jennifer Whiteford's illo.; Fists high thanks to Halline Overby's photo page; Take Chris Terry's words above and turn to page twenty-three. Thanks RoQue; "When you're more shocked that a heartless corporation lost the tiniest fraction of their wealth than you are that a human heart was choked of oxygen, that's seriously fucked up" thanks to Shane Milner for the Rhythm Chicken's illo.; Based on Black Jesus that J.J. painted in Good Times, flanked by Lemmy and Joey thanks to James Spooner for Dale's illo. (Thanks for not dying Dale); "Makes mistakes" belly tattoo and introducers of the beer koozie to Chile thanks to Kevin Dunn, Christelle Duvenage, Pitts Hollie, and Jesse Zeroed for The Dumpies interview, photos, and layout; Michael Schmidt was exposed for being an undercover white nationalist thanks to Sacia for the We Did This mini-interview; The first time I've ever read about a person having a negative reaction to zine libraries thanks to Kurt Morris, Kat Nijemeddi, Robbie Clark, and Dylan Davis for the Patrick Kindlon interview, photos, and layout; Imagine how more equitable, fair, and just the United States would be if Myriam Gurba was president thanks Chris Terry, Geoff Cordner, and Eric Baskauskas for the interview, photo, and layout; "We can't live in a world that stays unjust as it is forever" thanks to Donna Ramone, Alec Pugliese, Chey Espejo, and Lauren Denitzio for the Bad Moves interview, photos, and layout; "It's better to die a freak than live a normal life" thanks to Billups Allen and Codey Richards for the One Punk's Guide to John Waters and the illos.; High time we updated the illos. in the review sections/staplers are a menace thanks Kiyoshi Nakazawa.*

"Ar creating solidarity," Jon Mule, Moon Bandits, Danger, Ruckus, Riot, LP, Thanks to 117's rotation of reviewers: Liz Jones, Candace Hansen, Kayla Greet, Art Ettinger, Keith Rosson, Ty Stranglehold, Ryan Nichols, Theresa W., Rich Cocksedge, Nerb, Kurt Morris, Craven Rock, Mike Frame, Michael T. Fournier, Jimmy Alvarado, Sean Koepenick, Tim Brooks, Chad Williams, Emily T., Matt Average, Chris Terry, Juan Espinosa, Billups Allen, Jim Woster, Rick V., Buddha, and Paul J. Comeau.

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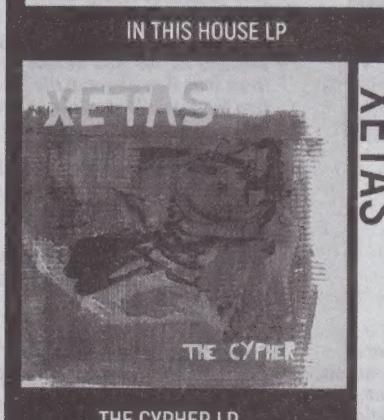
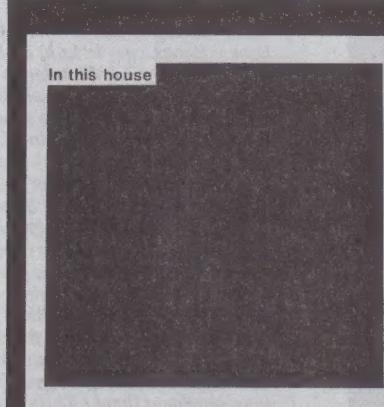
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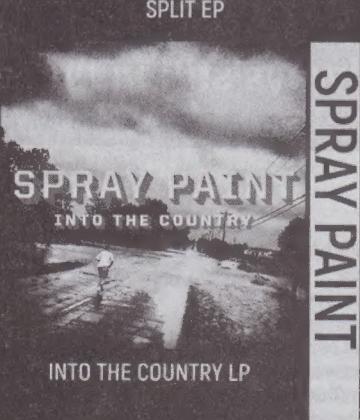
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The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, *Razorcake* wouldn't be what it is.

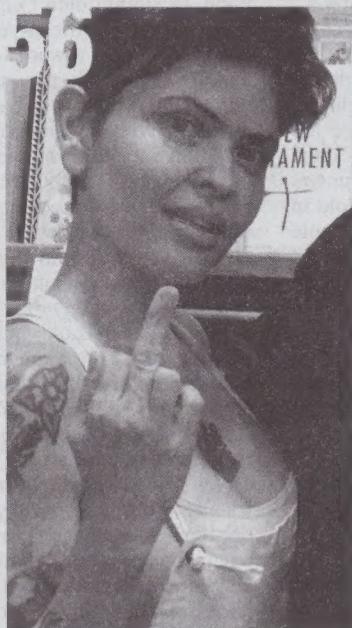
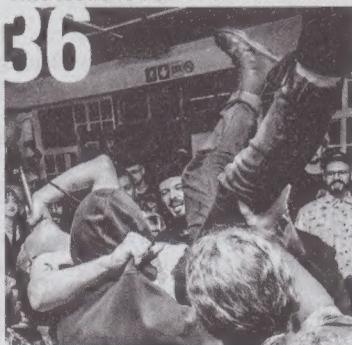
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This issue is dedicated to the memory of Little Richard.



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NEVER LET ME FORGET DONNA RAMONE

Conspiracy theories used to be fun.

My Brown Face Is Going to Hell

Conspiracy theories used to be fun. Listening to Art Bell on *Coast to Coast* after midnight when my parents had gone to sleep was one of my first acts of rebellion. Wrapped in a blanket, I sat with my face pressed to the speaker, scared I would wake someone up if the volume was even a decibel above a whisper. Ghost stories, cryptid encounters, and alien abductions told by the people who studied and experienced all these fantastic events, swearing on their lives how real and true it all was. By the dim orange glow of the dial on my dad's hi-fi receiver, I only caught the best stories, and was spared the worst.

White Christian supremacy peppers conspiracy circles, but as a kid I fully missed the dog whistles. When talk of government distrust and the global elite was brought up, my thoughts were, "Yeah, rich people are the decision makers and politicians, duh" and not, "The satanic illuminati is run by holographic lizard people, as was foretold in the bible." Yet, retelling stories about satanic cults, the illuminati or lizardmen were all part of my conspiracy talk if you caught me on the right day. This was wild, hilarious stuff, the opposite of my mundane, suburban life.

Though I'm old enough to remember some of the Satanic Panic of the 1980s and '90s on TV news reports, I don't recall encountering anyone believing any of it. Except, maybe I did. My friends and I got busted leaving high school on Halloween one year, and security dragged us to the office of the school cop, Officer Wiley. We must have been a sight: six goth kids dressed as the cast of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, seated in a row on uncomfortable chairs, waiting our turn to have our truancy ticket written. While silently staring at our shoes, terrified over how pissed our parents were about to be, the cop's secretary—an ancient, mousy, frail white woman with a permanent scowl—looked over her glasses and asked, "Are you supposed to be dressed up for Halloween?" Brad Bently was the only one brave enough to say anything to her. "Yeah. Because it's Halloween." She stood up, walked around her desk to put some papers in a file. Once she was close enough so she could speak quietly, she looking directly into my face said, "You're all going to hell."

Brad Bently was a stupidly fearless white kid, and the only one not stunned into disbelief. He immediately lost his shit. He told the cop what she had said, while simultaneously getting his ticket written, but Officer Wiley either didn't believe him or didn't care. Myself and a couple

others also told the cop what happened while our tickets were written, trying to corroborate the story and find some small justice for a bunch of kids who just loved Halloween. Predictably, we got little more than a, "I didn't hear anything." ACAB.

Brad Bently later mounted a personal justice campaign and went to every administrator, from the guidance counselors to the principal. We backed him up as witnesses, but it didn't matter. They collectively could not have given less of a shit about us. At the time, I assumed they all thought we were lying, or simply didn't care enough about a small group of fifteen-year-old weirdos to exert any energy towards our concerns. But, looking back, I'm sure a couple of those old white god-fearing Reaganites watched Geraldo Rivera and did actually think we were potential Satanists who were definitely going to hell. Over those four years, I lost count of the number of times I got dragged into an office because they were "concerned about my behavior." One time, it was for writing a (not good) poem about how the Nazis killed people, and how any of us could be the next to die at the hands of white supremacy. How naïve I was in the moment, unable to grasp how the authoritative white people scolding me had fully missed the point of my words.

A prime example of my conspiracy nonsense happened right after getting my driver's license. I drove my brother and his friends to our local gravity hill—the illusion of stopping your car in a specific spot and having it slowly coast uphill, a mainstay teen attraction in every town in America. With six idiots somehow smashed together in my 1989 Civic, I stopped the car on the railroad tracks and put it in neutral, demanding seriousness of everyone crammed together on this fateful night. I psychically attempted to summon the ghosts of the children who died when their school bus was hit by a train to push us safely off the tracks, at least that was the story I was told. In the deep, scared silence, Shawn Perry ripped a fart so loud it echoed across the California desert, and smelled so bad it must have offended the dead kids who never so much as nudged my little Honda. I laughed so hard I almost pissed myself. As we left to go to Denny's, I pointed to the top of a single hill in the distance, "I heard Satanists do rituals at the top of that hill. Cops found a stone altar and blood and when they tested it, the blood was from a baby."

Now, conspiracies about satanic ritual abuse are officially back, and part of

the Republican political discourse. The mainstream conspiracy is that Democrats are part of a Luciferian cabal. Possibly the largest online collective is the conspiracy cult QAnon, and they sincerely believe that George Soros is a Satanist who is funding pedophile sex rings made up of mole children chained up under Central Park, specifically for the Clintons to have sex with, and later murder and eat. They consider themselves "researchers," and get all their information from an anonymous poster on a lawless message board, super long YouTube videos, and random people on Twitter. They also think John F. Kennedy Jr. isn't dead, secretly Republican, and helping Trump in his quest to save the mole children. It all sounds fully made up and stupid, and easy to ignore—except Comet Ping Pong, the pizza place in D.C. where the local punks throw shows, was shot up by a man trying to save these imaginary mole children. His entire motive came from these theories, which are based entirely on social media repetition; the new brand of conspiracy media.

Art Bell (who died in 2018) and *Coast to Coast* have been fully eclipsed and replaced by the likes of Alex Jones and *Infowars*. It stings to see how much someone I once loved and enjoyed is reflected in such a delusional, xenophobic, racist conman. Jones screams on YouTube about how substances like fluoride in drinking water is turning frogs gay, Hillary Clinton is an actual literal demon, and that climate change is a hoax for governments to charge carbon tax. Yet, in both Art Bell's time and Alex Jones's, there was always the bigoted through line of anti-Semitic discourse about the World Bank, bible prophecies about the rapture supporting the Israeli apartheid, or the terrifying, racist belief of an inevitable, upcoming race war. After 9/11, both camps were very vocal about it being an inside job, yet also firmly believed that Muslims are in league with Satan and are working alongside Democrats to establish Sharia Law in America. Conspiracy theorists today foam at the mouth while ranting about a "white genocide." Flat earthers, when pushed, will eventually refute obvious evidence using bible quotes and xenophobic conspiracies about evil Jews controlling NASA or whatever.

Republican Party voters are now fully immersed in evangelical protestant conspiracy thinking. Whether they're insisting on opening up the country because Jesus will protect them from COVID-19 or still somehow insisting Obama was a



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How do any of us grapple living in a world where the police murder innocent people, industrialization is killing the planet, or gunmen can execute children?

Muslim born in Kenya, it's all tied to biased views against everyone who isn't them. It's difficult to confront and accept a world that's chaotic and unfair, completely different from your understanding of it. How do any of us grapple living in a world where the police murder innocent people, industrialization is killing the planet, or gunmen can execute children? It's easier to believe these things are lies. It's easier to believe those lies are spun by evil people. It's easier to write off the suffering of marginalized people if you

think they're sinister, Satan-worshipping pedophiles, and thus, can righteously justify furthering their suffering.

At the end of the day, I don't think I ever truly believed in ghosts, aliens, or any of the conspiracies I once repeated (except maybe that one paranoid week I'd rather not talk about). They were thrilling stories that made life seem mysterious and worthy of exploration, and I loved them for all the excitement they once brought me. Now, it's impossible to overlook how discriminatory

and intolerant this whole mess is. For a time, it shaped my identity and personality (one I still haven't fully shed). Instead, I've morphed that prior understanding into researching their bullshit and putting them on blast. We cannot let conspiracy thinking go unchecked because we cannot allow the poison messages within them to spread.

And for fuck's sake, turn off *Ancient Aliens*—that shit's racist as hell.

—Donna Ramone



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

What are cops afraid of?

Not Normal

Imagining a future without police

Why are cops such cowards?

This is a question I've been asking myself for years.

It's a question I've typed out on Twitter at least a dozen times, my passions enflamed by the latest police killing, and then erased out of fear of reprisal from bots and trolls and Blue Lives Matters psychos.

But the question remains: Why are cops so afraid?

The murder of George Floyd by the coward Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis has provoked outrage across the United States.

As I type this thousands are marching in protest in cities across the United States. In more than two dozen of these cities, the police have clashed with protestors resulting in injuries, arrests, and incalculable property damage.

For the last week fires have raged across the country in cities where police have murdered black men and women. Some of the cities have been sites of systemic oppression.

But few could have predicted what happened in La Mesa, a small community less than ten miles from my home in southeast San Diego.

After a long and peaceful protest, police launched teargas and fired rubber bullets at protestors. Windows were smashed, fires set, businesses looted.

Today community members are cleaning up the mess. Chase Bank and Union Bank were completely destroyed. Vons grocery store on University Avenue was hit hard by looters. Several stores had their inventory ruined by the sprinkler systems that went off when the building caught fire.

What happened? How did a peaceful protest turn violent?

The same thing that happened all over the country.

Police provoked it.

In La Mesa, eyewitness accounts suggest the cops got spooked when the protestors marched on the police precinct.

Why is it that when cops get scared the public has to bear the burden of their fear?

Why is it that when cops train their guns on civilians, it's up to us to remain calm?

Why are cops such cowards? What exactly are they afraid of?

As George Floyd lay handcuffed on the ground with Derek Chauvin's knee on his neck for over eight minutes, he repeatedly said, "I can't breathe."

As video of his murder circulated, it brought back memories of Eric Garner, who was murdered under similar circumstances by Daniel Pantaleo in 2014.

In many states it is legal for law enforcement officers to use chokeholds when subduing a citizen. In states where chokeholds are illegal, police get around this by using different language to describe different methods that achieve the same or similar results.

In California police use a technique called the "carotid restraint." This bullshit has been going on for decades.

In 1982 the LAPD was embroiled in a controversy about its use of "upper body-control holds."

The *Los Angeles Herald* and the *Los Angeles Times* reported that over a seven-year period fifteen people had died in police custody as a result of chokeholds.

Of these fifteen people, twelve of the victims were black.

In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Police Chief Daryl Francis Gates, suggested to a reporter that the reason why so many black people had died from the chokehold was because "the veins and the arteries do not open up as fast as they do in normal people."

Normal people.

In L.A. during the late '70s and early '80s, punk rockers did not fit into the category of "normal people."

Feelings of abnormality go with punk rock like racism and cops.

In the '70s, cops violently disrupted punk shows as a matter of course. The police used their batons to clear the rooms and empty the streets.

They had come to regard punks as a kind of moral deviant who were often too fucked up to resist. Every L.A. punk from this era has at least once story of being thrown down a flight of stairs, beaten over the head, or terrorized by law enforcement.

The police pummeled punks with impunity. Even when word about a particularly brutal beating got out, such as the St. Patrick's Day Massacre aka police ambush at the Elk's Lodge on March 17, 1979, no one cared because punks were regarded as a blight on society.

Not normal.

Keith Morris, the vocalist for Black Flag and the Circle Jerks, was once beaten by a phalanx of police officers, removed from

the scene, and dumped in a "bad" (aka non-white) neighborhood where the cops were certain a terrible fate would befall him.

One of the reasons why Oki-Dog became such a popular hang out with L.A. punks is that it wasn't safe to hang out at venues after shows. There was seldom time to organize a place to meet up afterwards and there was safety in numbers. So off to Oki-Dog they went.

The artist Raymond Pettibon told me that Gates had a hard-on for punks because his son, Lowell Gates, was one. I don't know how involved Lowell was in the punk scene, but he was most certainly a drug addict and had a long criminal record.

(Daryl Gates wrote in his memoir that at his swearing-in ceremony as Chief of Police Lowell was high on heroin, which seems like a perfectly reasonable response to learning that your dickhead dad wants you to hang out with a million cops.)

Gates was the architect of SWAT and CRASH, normalizing paramilitary approaches to community policing. Since the L.A. Riots, when Gates was finally shown the door, the LAPD, and police in general, have never had more power.

They have militarized their operations and stockpiled weapons of war. They show up at protests and large gatherings and waddle around in tactical gear like characters in a video game. They carry flash bang grenades and teargas launchers and ride around in armored vehicles like actors in a bad movie.

The police have never had more autonomy.

Every time the video for an officer-involved shooting goes viral there's a public outcry. Outrage spasms across social media and then dies down until it's kicked off the news cycle by another school shooting or political scandal. In the most heinous cases, officers are charged, but they almost always get off. These murderers come out the other end of byzantine legal proceedings exonerated so that they cannot be sued in civil courts.

The lessons are twofold: 1) It's okay to kill black people, brown people, people in mental distress, anyone not normal. 2) You will get away with it.

And they do. So the cycle repeats ad infinitum.

The police have never been more different from us.

Cops are people who thrive in environments where violence is



BILL PINKEL | @IN_DADDING_AROUND

Cops are people who thrive in environments where violence is normalized.

normalized. It is a lifestyle that attracts people with violent agendas, like racists and white supremacists. These cops have been emboldened by a racist president who uses the tools of totalitarianism to usurp political power.

They see themselves as foot soldiers in a righteous struggle. They see anyone not like them as less than them.

People of color. Protesters. Progressives. Journalists.

Not normal.

So what are they so afraid of? With the decks stacked in their favor, why are they so afraid?

They are afraid of being exposed.
Want to see a cop panic?

Stick a camera in their face.

The shocking amount of violence perpetrated against members of the press over the last week underscores their fear.

Even if the police believe what they're doing is right, they know that many of their actions are illegal. What they are afraid of is accountability. There is an ideology of white supremacy, but it is not a unifying movement.

Each and every cop is in it for themselves. Their one and only objective is to get through the day, to survive the shift.

There may have been a time when cops cared about people other than themselves, but those days are long gone.

There was once a time when children grew up respecting and even admiring police officers. Not anymore.

I believe there are a large number of cops who hate what they have become. They blame the job for changing them into people they despise. That doesn't make them less bad. All it means is they have less conviction than the people whose hearts are filled with hate.

More people than ever before despise cops. At these protests popping up around the country, every protester is a citizen journalist and all those cameras are trained on the police. The world is watching and the cops are freaking out.

As videos spread of cops firing tear gas at peaceful protests, wounding and maiming law-abiding citizens with rubber bullets, they are showing the country what they are. They are showing us their fear.

As the protests spread from city to city, people are beginning to understand that in this topsy-turvy world where school shootings are normal, unemployment is normal, infectious disease is normal, mass murder is normal, social distancing is normal, layoffs are normal, masks are normal, and cops killing unarmed citizens are normal, we have more power than we think.

Together, we've got the power to take weapons of war and tools of oppression away from the police, take them right out of their hands.

Together we can ensure our taxes don't go to the police and make them public servants again.

Together we can create a new way of being in the world that doesn't involve terrorizing people of color.

Together we can foster new alliances and begin the painful work of healing from centuries of trauma.

Together we can be fearless.

Together we can create a new normal.
We've got the numbers.

—Jim Ruland



OUR LADY OF CACOPHONY

666*  H.A.G.S. 

WRITTEN &
ILLUSTRATED BY
SOPHIA ZARDERS
@SOPHIAZARDERS

What's up, guys!?



Suns out, tits out!



Heyyy baddies...



Wow, this is
still so weird. I
actually kinda
miss school.

I mean, I miss
you guys, obvi, but
I've missed knowing
what to do, where to
go, when to be
Somewhere.

I'm shook
I got my
finals done!

Right!?! I think my last essay was
just emojis and
Charli lyrics. XCX

Do you
think we're
gonna go back
in the fall?

OMFG. My sister is being
so fucking annoying...

HELP!!
Addie, stop
being so
dramatic!
Shut up!!

Miss you both so much. We
would've been having last
day of school slushies
today.

I really hope things
go back to normal
soon. Normal-ish.
I feel so drained
every day.

Anyways,
what should
we watch on
Netflix Party
???

The
Half
of
It!



Again?
It's cute,
but I've been
dying to
watch Skate
Kitchen.



Hell yeah!
!!



FUCK!!
Addie,
STOP!!



A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARBWEIL

We should all learn how to work less.

When We Gonna Get Off Work

The band Martha often tell stories in their songs. "Lucy Shone a Light on You" is about a writer who exacts vengeance on her deadbeat boyfriend. "Goldman's Detective Agency" imagines Emma Goldman as a PI serving her radical leftwing community. "Mini Was a Preteen Arsonist" is about exactly what it sounds like. And so many of the rest of their songs are stories of love in its many forms: teenage crushes, lifelong marriages, hookups, friendships, sweet moments, and broken hearts. They're mostly but not exclusively queer love stories. The lyrics have a way of piquing my curiosity, drawing me into the song, painting characters and settings.

But the band is more than just their lyrics. Martha have found a way to blend four elements that should be disparate into something harmonic. Start with the guitars. One is always fuzzed and distorted. The other is usually clean. They play off each other. One heavy and driving, one happy and melodic, both finding a way to share a sonic space. The bass lies below this, often with that Motown rhythm punks have been stealing at least since Iggy Pop's "Lust for Life." But when there's space for the bass to walk around that bouncing beat, it walks around. Holding this all together is a drummer willing to slow down when necessary, but always looking to drive the tempo. They also have four vocalists with very different voices that make for rich harmonies.

They're the perfect band to listen to when you really want to listen to music—when you're alone on a long drive or staring out the window of a train or working manual labor.

I've been working manual labor lately. It's strange. I have a love/hate relationship with manual labor that's almost entirely hate. For years, I worked construction. I worked on masonry crews, painting crews, and carpentry crews. I hung drywall. I stripped, dried in, and shingled roofs. I learned basic electrical and plumbing. I did it all, and I still know how to do it all. With enough money and time and one helper, I could build a brand new building just like the one you're living in now. Despite this, I won't do any construction work for anyone. Not even for my wife. Most of the time, I won't even do it for myself.

But there is one special circumstance when I'll work construction. It seems that,

whenever I finish a major writing project—either a novel or a book of scholarship—I start looking around the house for something to fix or improve. Typically it's something that I can do in a week and would be crazy expensive if I hired someone else to do it: custom furniture, built-in bookshelves, window seats, that kind of thing. I've looked around the house and imagined bigger, more impressive projects, but conditions would have to be just right for me to do those. I'd have to be at the end of a big writing project with a ton of free time and nowhere to go.

This is exactly where I was when I finished writing a book in March just as a global pandemic and statewide shelter-in-place order struck. All of my travel plans were cancelled. I was on sabbatical for the spring semester, so I didn't have to go into work or work at home. For the first time in memory, I had a ton of free time. Enough to play music and read books and go for long runs and still have an extra three or four hours a day to kill. So I started a project that would take a month to pull off.

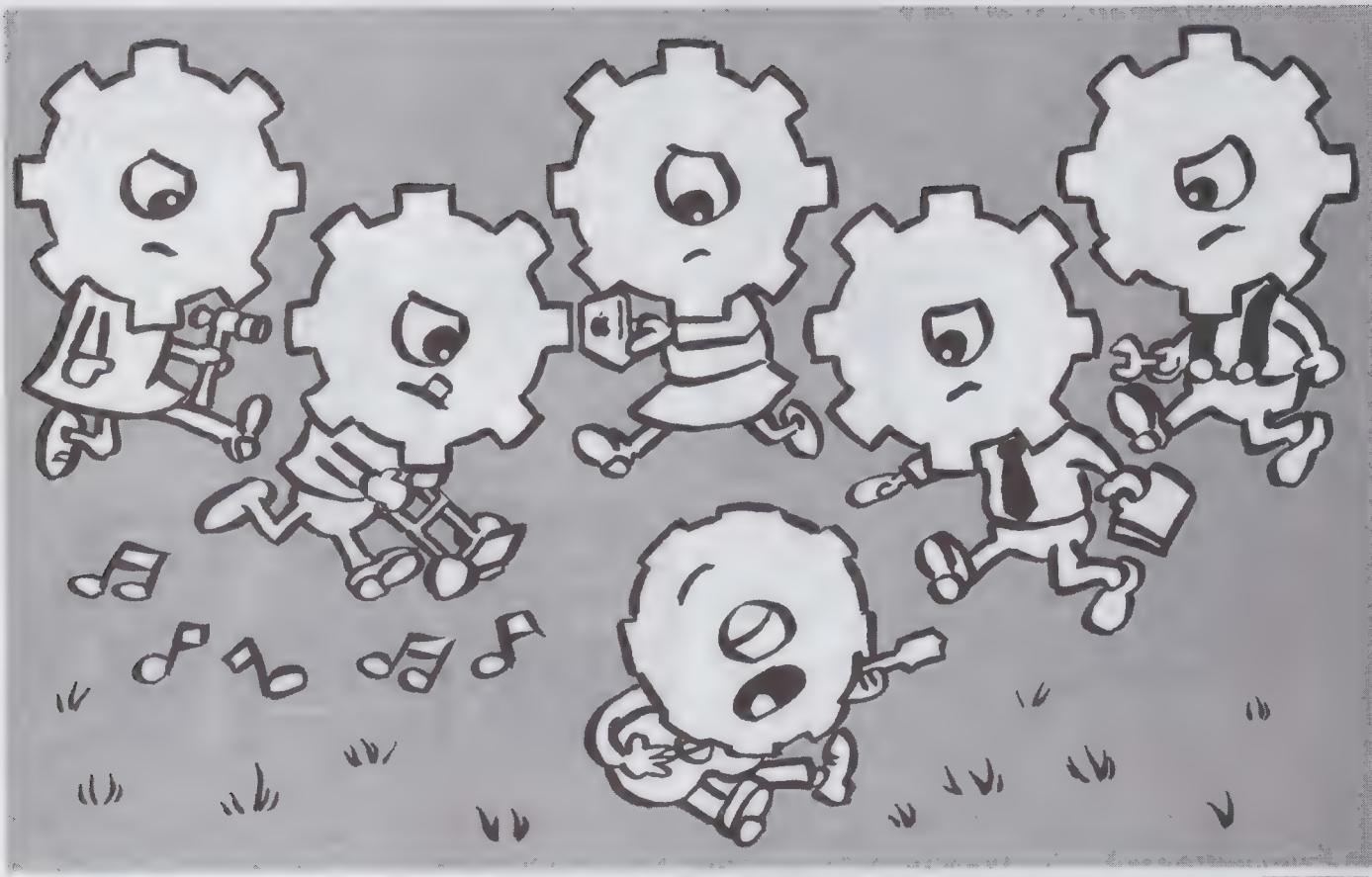
I had this unused area underneath my garage. It's about twenty feet long and ten feet wide. It didn't have a floor, just dirt that sloped down pretty steeply. There wasn't room to fit a full-sized door going into it. For years, I'd considered building a floor and using the room as storage. I didn't because I'm opposed to storage spaces. They're just a place to put junk you should get rid of. But with a month stuck at home and nothing much to do, I decided to make a music room out of it. I'd build a floor, double the walls, bring my guitars and amps and Felizon's drums down, and make a room where we could play as loud as we want. When Felizon started calling it a music studio (and when it became clear that the shelter-in-place order was going to last another month), I got even more serious about making it a cool room. I built the floor and walls, wired outlets and lights, and insulated everything to make it soundproof. When Felizon—who works in a prison—pointed out the nefarious purposes other people could use a soundproof basement for, I cut a hole in the exterior wall and installed a solid-wood five-foot tall door that I'd built myself. I spent eight weeks turning a muddy crawl space into a music studio. I found myself really enjoying doing the construction work that I typically hate.

The whole time I worked on the studio, I listened to Martha and tried to understand why I can love construction work when I do it for myself and hate it when I do it for anyone else. I think it has something to do with the nature of work in our neoliberal society.

There's a working class aspect to Martha's songs. Though all four vocalists have very different voices, they share an accent that even Americans can recognize as working class. You can imagine any one of them saying, "'ello, guv'na" without having to affect an accent. One of the singers even addresses it in "So Sad (So Sad)," singing, "I told you that I sometimes feel ashamed of all these labored vowels and glottal stops, the way I say my name." Even as he sings about it, he misses the t's in glottal. It adds a richness to the song the same way the singer of the Pine Hill Haints' thick Alabama accent enriches his songs about skateboarding down a hill.

More than the accent, the working class comes through as an underlying presence of all their songs of labor, struggle, dreams of "getting out," and challenges of staying in their former coal mining town in the economically recessed north of England. Nothing illustrates this better than "Precarious (Supermarket Song)." The narrator is attracted to a grocery store employee when they hear the employee getting verbally abused by the manager. The narrator—and anyone who's worked in the service industry—can relate and is drawn to the employee's dismissal of the manager. Later, the narrator sings, "This flutter in my chest keeps on getting scarier, like an undetected item in your baggage area." It combines a love song with the fear of precarity that every working class person knows these days. After all, there can only be an undetected item in the baggage area when a large grocery store chain replaces their already-underpaid workers with machines. The song ends on a refrain, "Oh, oh, when you gonna get off work?"

Part of the attraction of the grocery store worker in the song is their rejection of work. It's an attitude that is almost taboo in our current society. Especially in America, we have an almost religious reverence for work. When we're doing work, we're holy, and those who eschew work are evil. We seem to have internalized the idea that we are our work, that work is our purpose, it's



I listened to Martha and tried to understand why I can love construction work when I do it for myself and hate it when I do it for anyone else.

our reason for existing. It doesn't matter what kind of work we do. We can be doing something as pointless as answering emails about a brainstorming meeting to envision a new corporate directive, but it's work, and so it's important.

In contrast, when we do things solely for the intrinsic joy of doing it—say, going surfing even though you'll never go pro, or noodling around on the guitar, or reading a crime novel that no one recommended—we're wasting time and our potential to be productive. There's an almost constant pressure to work. We learn to feel like we should always be fixing something, mowing something, cleaning something, posting something, checking our email. It sometimes feels endless. When it does, I sing to myself, "Oh, oh, when you gonna get off work?"

This is part of the reason I won't work construction for anyone else: because I work too much as it is. And not just me. As a society, we're all working too much. Repeated sociological studies have shown

that productivity ends after thirty-five hours a week, yet we're still expected to put in another fifteen or twenty hours. And we're too productive as it is. Our production is exhausting our natural resources. Our work is choking the life out of the planet and destroying human habitats. When this pandemic struck and everyone was forced to work less, to travel less, to consume less, suddenly our air cleared and wildlife bounced back. This should trigger a paradigm shift. We should all learn how to work less. When I built the studio, I only worked for three or four hours a day on it. That seemed like enough. I finished the project without exhausting myself. The whole time, I thought about how nice life would be if we all cut our workdays in half.

The second, and more vital step, is that we have to stop finding our meaning in work. We need to think about a long forgotten philosophical text from a German scholar named Karl Gross. In his book *The Play of Man*, Gross surveys dozens of psychological

studies to explore why we play, how we find joy, and when we're genuinely free. He concludes that the true basis of freedom is "the joy in being the cause." Give an infant a spoon. The first thing they'll do is bang it against something and make a sound. They'll enjoy it because they made it happen. The sound will please them. If you let them, they'll keep banging that spoon until they can find a rhythm, until they can make different tones. As they grow, they'll figure out how to make that a song. That's the joy. That's the freedom.

We've conflated it. We've decided that the song only matters if you sell it, if you can do it for a living. We've decided that the money and the capitalist production are what matters. We're wrong. Two months of listening to Martha and building a basement have shown me otherwise. The real joy and freedom come from the ability to make music just for me and anyone who wants to come by the basement and make music with me.

—Sean Carswell

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**THE WORLD/INFERNO
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Human Heart



AMERICAN GRILLED CHEESE REVIEW

REV. NOIR

Sickness was freedom.

Sick (pre) Teen

When I was about nine years old, I was really into being sick. I'd had pneumonia when I was four, leaving me susceptible to long-running coughs for years afterward. If I got sick, as kids tend to do (probably from eating boogers and never taking a bath), it would generally be accompanied with a cough. The coughs could go on for days, weeks, or even months—the illness that brought on the cough might disappear in a day or two, but the cough itself stuck around.

I welcomed having a cough. It meant I didn't have to go to school. It was as if an Angel of Pestilence swooped down from the heavens on a phlegm-colored horse (wait, I may be mixing this up with one of the Four Horsemen) (possibly Tully Blanchard) and rescued me from the chronic, unending horror of The Daily Grind. I was *special!* I was *anointed!* I was the *chosen one!* My dad had to go to work, my mom had to go to work, my brother and all the other kids I knew had to go to school and *line up and sit here and go there and pay attention and no staring out the window*—and I didn't have to do jack shit. The machine that ground us up and dulled our minds and crushed our spirits and bored us to the point of utter stupefaction and total despair from age five or six until the point where we were so old and flimsy that we needed to be put out to pasture (mostly to make room for fresher carrion)—a machine which we were told, from childhood on, that we had no recourse but to be fed to—would rumble right past me that day. Their goddamned meat grinder was gonna be short a body, and they were just gonna hafta deal with it, because that body was gonna be sitting on the couch in its PJs, watching game shows.

Fuck, did I love game shows.

The first part of the morning on any given sick day was a bit of a preamble: It began with The Initial Detection of the Holy Fungus of Malady, followed by The Pleading of the Case to the Mother. If these early trials were passed successfully, one nervously submitted to The Great and Terrible Final Judgment of the Father, the ultimate arbiter of one's health status (at least with regards to compulsory school attendance). If this final test was passed, you were golden—free to sit around in your pajamas, trying your best to look miserable, thereby deflecting envy and suspicion, while the rest of the household scurried along without you. Yes, I will take one tablespoon of Vicks® Formula 44® every four hours. Yes, I know who to call

if there's an emergency. Yes, I think I'll be all right by myself. Once everybody finally trudged out the door though, to grudgingly participate in their required daily grinding—FUCKING PARTY TIME!!! *Joker's Wild* with Jack Barry!!! Then *The Price Is Right* with Bob Barker! Let the other saps sit in school and *learn* about history, I actually *saw* the first episodes after they added the *Showcase Showdown as they were happening!* Then *Wheel of Fortune* with Chuck Woolery! Chuck Woolery is a fucking knob, but I was home sick from school for the entire *first week* that show was on the air! I watched the first five episodes *ever!* As for Chuck Woolery, who now does some kinda right-wing radio bullshit, I guess if I was such a knothead that I couldn't keep TV meteorologist Pat Sajak from taking my job *right the fuck when my show was finally starting to get super-popular*, I suppose I'd turn out to be some salty old piece of shit, too. Then *Gambit*, with Wink Martindale! How can you not love a show hosted by a guy named "Wink Martindale?" Then *Jackpot!* That one was kinda dumb. Then a perennial classic: *Hollywood Squares* with Peter Marshall! Given that Peter Marshall's birth name was "Peter LaCock," you kinda gotta wonder how he didn't wind up doing porn for a living! Then it was noon, and suddenly there were no more game shows! Everybody showed the local news! It was horrible! I don't want to watch the WBAY farm report with Les Sturmer! I have no interest in price trends of canners and cutters! I wanna see some dolt try to guess the price of a new Chevy Chevette without going over! Don't these people know *I'm sick?* Phooey.

After lunch, they'd come back with *Password* with Allen Ludden, which was pretty boring, and *The Newlywed Game* with Bob Eubanks, which was generally amusing, yet felt somewhat inauthentic due to the contestants not being required to have any actual knowledge, other than knowing stuff about each other. Well how the hell is *that* cool? That was followed by *The \$10,000 Pyramid* with Dick Clark, and finally, my favorite, *Match Game '75*. I loved Gene Rayburn and his microphone that looked like something that snapped off of Uncle Martin's head on *My Favorite Martian*, I loved the panel of celebrities (even though I still really couldn't tell you what Brett Somers or Fannie Flagg did that bequeathed them celebrity status), and I even loved how when Gene Rayburn would start a question with "Dumb Dora was

so dumb..." the crowd would shout "HOW DUMB WAS SHE???" *en masse*, in much the same way that crowds at a WWE™ TV taping shout a wrestler's tagline in mindless unison these days. These were *my people*. They were unfailingly pleasant to me. At the beginnings of their shows, they would tell me how happy they were that I was watching them that day; at the end, they'd thank me for hanging out. During the commercials, I was continually reassured that wholesomeness, deliciousness, and the overall happiness of my family could be attained, maintained, and sustained by a few simple additions to my grocery cart each week. Sure, maybe I was coughing up a lung or blowing huge ropes of snot out of my nose, but I considered that a small price to pay for a day spent under such otherwise pleasant circumstances. While the healthy were out greasing the wheels of The Great Machine with blood and sundry other bodily fluids, I was in my bathrobe and slippers, pleasantly isolated from human contact and its various associated frictions. I was comfortable and very much at peace. Sickness was freedom.

The glorious tranquility of a day spent sitting in the basement in front of the family's black-and-white Zenith® would be shattered when I heard the door open and my brother return home from school. Suddenly, I was no longer an elite being who was afforded special privileges: School was over, *everyone* was free. Sure, I could still watch *Tattletales* with Bert Convy, but *so what?* I could do that *any* day after school. I was no longer special. In point of fact, my brother, by virtue of his having toughed out another day In The Shit, was now more special than I. His day had become immeasurably better upon his returning home; mine immeasurably worse. Mom and dad would cut *him* some slack; he'd spent all day in school. No one would cut *me* any slack, I goofed off all day. I was abruptly operating from a significant disadvantage. People were coming home, making noise, *do this and do that and you had all day to clean up this mess*—everything had been so wonderful when I was just sitting in the basement with Richard Dawson and Charles Nelson Reilly and my Vicks® Formula 44®, being sick. Now it sucked! Who could endure such conditions? All these people making demands on my time and impinging upon my glorious solitude and requiring me to *do this-that-and-the-other-thing*, it was terrible! Humankind was not made to endure such bullshit! It's madness I tell you! There



MITCH CLEM AND AMANDA KIRK | @MITCHCLEMCOMIX AND @NATIONOFAMANDA

At peace doing nothing, and desperate to extend the nothingness as long as possible.

was only one possible solution to escape this endless cycle of agony for another day: I needed to be sick tomorrow, too! So, I'd wake up the next morning and hope that I was (or appeared) ill enough to extend my absence a second day, and the cycle would start anew. *Bless me, O Illness, with your saving touch! RELEASE ME FROM THE UNHOLY BURDEN OF PARTICIPATION!!!*

Being sick was great. Summer vacation and stuff like that was awesome, sure—but that was different. You figured you had that coming. But, in summer, there were always things to do, or things you wanted to do, or things you were pissed that you weren't doing. If you were sick, you were free from all that. You had nothing to do but sit on the couch and watch game shows and blow your nose, so that's what you did. You were peaceful and free. It was like a gift from the gods. It wasn't until I was much older that I realized what a fucking fucked up viewpoint that was. Then again, it's also sort of an indictment of how

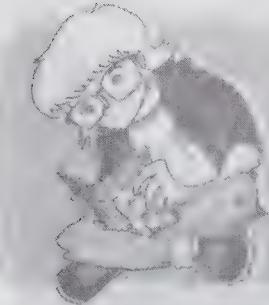
crappy the daily grind is—that you'd wish ill health upon yourself just to be freed from the requirements of participation therein. Oh well, things are tough all over.

So now we're sitting in the middle of a global pandemic. And, whilst I assure you that I am most certainly *not* praying to be thwacked by the germy hand of Pestilence these days, the end result is somewhat similar: I'm sitting at home, doing nothing, feeling peaceful and free. I'm working at home from my Rock Room—home of my record collection and the usual piles of musical gear. I don't drive my car all week. I have next to nothing to do on the weekend. No gigs to play, no bands to see, no roller derby to announce, no parties to attend, no road trips to plan. I take walks, read old comic books, watch old wrestling DVDs, play albums to which I haven't listened in twenty or thirty years. I'm starting to feel like I used to feel when I was nine—at peace having nothing to do and doing nothing, and

desperate to extend the nothingness as long as possible.

I realize I've gotten off light (thus far). This week the U.S. hit 100,000 deaths from COVID-19. Forty million people have filed for unemployment in the last two months. People have lost their lives and their livelihoods; all I've lost is my mojo. That's what we jokingly used to refer to as "first world problems" not so long ago, when we still clung to the illusion we still lived in a first world country. Humble as it is, however, it's the only mojo I've got, and I'd like to get it back. But, since my game shows are coming on and I have Vicks® Formula 44® to take; please take this time to do something SO FUCKING AWESOME with your creative energies that it gets me back off the couch when this is over. The demons of lethargy are re-staking their claim to my soul and my eternal cool is in your hands!

Thanks,
—Norb



PUNK PARENTHOOD FOR THE SLEEP DEPRIVED

JENNIFER WHITEFORY

Read, read, read,
read. And then
smash white
supremacy.

Take a Look. It's in a Book.

As I write this America is on fire, and maybe when you're reading this it still will be. Even if fires are no longer burning in physical spaces, the problems that led to the burning will still be raging.

Currently, as a white person, I am in a position where society cannot afford my silence. From my position of privilege, my job is to work to make things better and dismantle white supremacy. As the parent of two young kids, it is also my job to raise humans who will be actively anti-racist and aware of their own privilege. It's not enough for them to be good, kind people if they don't recognize their own position in the world and work to elevate others. Like a lot of people, I'm overwhelmed and I'm making mistakes and trying to correct them.

All my life, when I have had doubt, or stress, or fear, I have turned to books. And so again, amidst the endless uncertainty that is parenthood these days, I turn to books. I wasn't sure how best to use this column as a productive platform during this time, so I've decided to write about books that parents can access to broaden their children's perceptions of the world and to spark discussions on vital topics. In their excellent book, *Nurtureshock*, Po Bronson and Ashley Merryman talk about studies that show how dramatically and quickly children's attitudes about race can improve, just by having parents speak to them frankly and positively about racial differences.

The books on my small list here are great books for everyone, but particularly if you are a white parent of a white child and want to work constantly towards raising anti-racist children. If you are a friend, aunt, uncle, or family member who likes to give books as gifts to the children in your life, this list is for you too.

As with any book, check into what you've selected before giving it to a child. Parents tend to know their own children best, and can tell if a child can process a book or not. Concepts my own sons couldn't grasp a few months ago now seem within their reach. I used to stress about how to speak to them about my issues with police, but this spring I had a frank discussion with my older son about the abuses of power and toxic culture present in policing. He understood enough to ask some good questions and it didn't seem to shake him up or make him feel wildly unsafe.

My kids have always been more engaged with fiction than non-fiction,

but they love the real-world discussion that comes when we talk about the issues raised by the stories we read. Some kids prefer straight-up facts in their books and don't want to fuss around with stories. So I've included all kinds of books in this list, including some that center black characters without surrounding them with capital "I" Issues, because we need to view all people as capable and deserving of joy and love and happiness.

There are so many great books for children that discuss race and tell stories with race at the center. These are just ones we've enjoyed. It's hard to make a list like this without stressing out over obvious gaps, but at least this is a solid beginning. The best thing about finding one book you like is that it's probably going to lead you to ten more books you also like. Read, read, read, read. And then smash white supremacy.

Books for Babies and Toddlers (from birth to around age two)

• *Woke Baby* by Mahogany L. Browne

This is a board book meant for very young children, telling a simple story about empowerment and strength with very cute, baby-friendly illustrations.

• *One Love* by Cedella Marley

Another board book that is perfect for very young kids. Lyrics from Bob Marley's "One Love" are illustrated by his daughter, Cedella, and the illustrations show people of all races working together in an urban community.

• *Dream Big, Little One* by Vashti Harrison

This is the board book version of Harrison's book for older children called *Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History*. Each page shows a simple illustration of one person and a short sentence about their accomplishments. My kids always loved books like this when they were younger, where there are simple and clear pictures in a similar style on each page.

(Maybe this goes without saying, but please buy books featuring women and girls for your male children. We are quick to assume boys won't enjoy books that center female characters but we rarely do the same for girls with books that center male characters. Little boys who grow up knowing that female characters exist and have interesting stories will be the better for it.)

Picture Books for Preschoolers (age two-and-a-half to five-ish)

• *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt De La Pena

A big favorite in our house, this is a simple story about a boy and his grandmother taking the bus to volunteer at a soup kitchen. The relationship between the boy and his grandmother is key. The reader sees the influence that his grandmother's views of the world have on the way her grandson processes the world around him.

• *Princess Hair* by Sharee Miller

This is a fun and joyful picture book about black girls and their hair. My white kid with very straight hair was mesmerized by this book and asked to have it read over and over again. It's a great book for younger preschoolers because the text rhymes and has a great rhythm to it.

• *Jabari Jumps* by Gaia Cornwall

This is a simple story about a dad taking his kids to the pool. His son Jabari wants to jump off the high diving board and the story shows him conquering his fear and succeeding, thanks to his own bravery and the unwavering support of his dad. This story centers this black family and tells a story that most kids can relate to.

• *We March* by Shane W. Evans

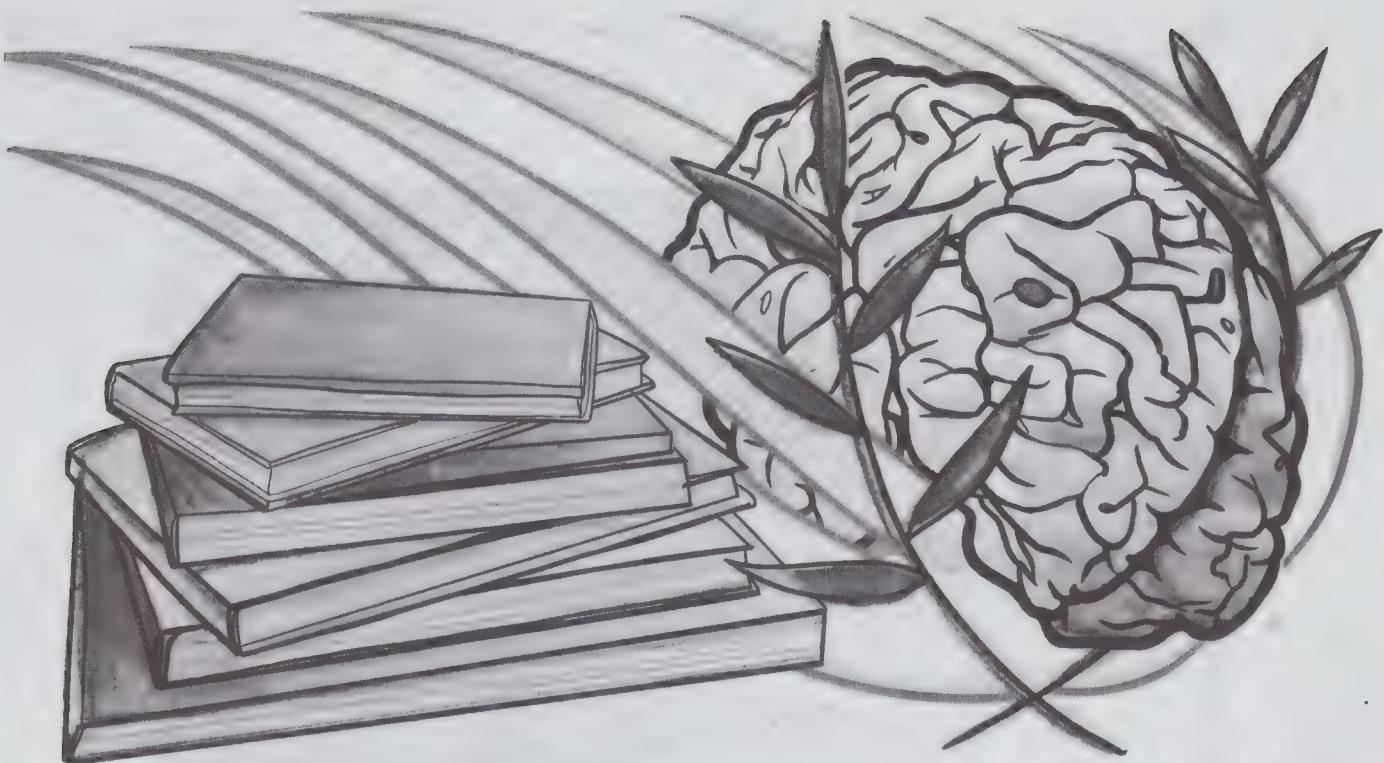
This is a non-fiction story about the March on Washington written in simple yet inspiring language. It's a great starting point to discuss protest and marches, as well as the civil rights movement. My older son is big into musical theatre and so knows about the history of segregation because of the musical version of *Hairspray*, which is a weird but helpful starting point for discussions in our house about racism and protest. This book enhanced his learning with a non-fiction, kid-friendly, lesson about the movement.

• *Ada Twist, Scientist* by Andrea Beaty

Another book featuring an inspiring black female main character. This whole series of books about kids into different aspects of STEM is great and this book especially is really fun. Great rhymes and rhythms in the text, and a cool and uplifting story about being a smart and ambitious kid.

Middle Grade Books (ages six to twelve or so)

• *The Vanderbeekers of 141st Street* by Karina Yan Glaser



JACKIE RUSTED | @JACKIERUSTED

My older son is big into musical theatre and so knows about the history of segregation because of the musical version of *Hairspray*, which is a weird but helpful starting point for discussions in our house about racism and protest.

A big favorite in our house. This is the first one of an excellent series. The books mention that the family is mixed race, they live in Harlem, and the characters are beautifully detailed and unique. There is much made of “diversity” and it’s often spoken about with a bit of an eye roll, but this book and the others in the series show how enthralling stories can be when populated by a truly diverse group of characters.

• *Not My Idea: A Book about Whiteness*
by Anastasia Higginbotham

This is a book targeted at white kids which speaks frankly about white people and racism. It’s accessible, unflinching, and funny. A great start for any parent who doesn’t know where to begin when talking to their white children about race and white supremacy.

• *Can I Touch Your Hair?: Poems of Race, Mistakes, and Friendship*
by Irene Latham and Charles Waters

A great book for middle schoolers grappling with race and identity. This is written as poems between two characters, one black and one white. For everyone wanting to learn more and do better, there needs to be an understanding that we will make mistakes and we have to not be afraid of those mistakes. Kids can be perfectionists and we expect a lot from them, so having this book, with “mistakes” right in the title, really supports them in

learning to do better without being afraid of messing up.

• *A Good Kind of Trouble*
by Lisa Moore Ramee

Another great middle grade book showing a variety of characters with flaws and imperfections as well as different opinions, tastes, and ideas about how life should work. Sensitive and engaging and with lots of real-world stuff woven into it.

Books for Teens

My experience with this level of book is smaller, since my children are too young, but these are some books I’ve read myself that I would recommend for teenage readers.

• *The Hate U Give* and *On the Come Up*
by Angie Thomas

Both of Thomas’s YA novels are great, compulsively readable, and pull no punches chronicling the characters’ experiences with racism. There is humor and lots of love among the tragic elements of each, and both stories have a lot to teach and show, especially for kids existing outside of the worlds Thomas’s characters inhabit.

• *March* (books one, two, and three)
by John Lewis

These were some of the best graphic novels I’ve ever read; stories told by someone who was there within the civil rights movement. As a Canadian, this

movement wasn’t covered in any of my history classes and I learned so much from this series about the history of racism and brutality in the United States. I realized reading these books that I had a naïve and kind of sanitized understanding of the movement, and these books opened my eyes so much I really feel that these should be taught in every school to every kid.

• *Between the World and Me*
by Ta-Nehisi Coates

This is a beautifully written book about the symbolism and experience of blackness in the United States, written as a letter to the author’s teenage son. It’s probably best for older teens, but so worth reading for everyone. It had a major impact on my own understanding of race and was one of the key works that pushed me to diversify my own reading and learning.

I know the solace that comes from books isn’t enough to fix things, but reading is a vital part of white people doing the work to educate ourselves and guide our children. We tend to fear the unknown. We fear not knowing enough to do the right thing. A bit of reading can go a long way to getting us out of that state of mind and helping us do our part.

—Jennifer Whiteford



Halline Overby's Photo Page

Fist Raised, Los Angeles 2020 / Shot on a Nishika n8000 on 35mm film

DIARY
COMIC

Quarantine Daydreams

• ROLLERSKS •
SESSION

BY: TENDER SPECK!!



PURO PINCHE POETRY Y CUENTOS

EDITED BY EVER VELASQUEZ AND EUGENIA NICOLE

we are more
than sex
symbols, maids,
and gangsters

do you need to go so often

i think displaying the tender things
to a therapist or anyone, other than
through gossip con mis tios or tias,
must be mind fucking to my grandmother.

she and mother ask me about it;
i see where she gets the confusion
on communication existing outside of family.
-don't tell our business-
mantra for decades, but
our business isn't even our business?
what cancer does my other aunt have?
i couldn't have told you two months ago.
my uncle is probably gay?
i couldn't have told you one year ago.

these words are my rebellion,
because everyone in our generations
unsure of what their tongues can do
if they're not in church,
but how exhausting
it can get for me.
to always
resist this kind of silence.

license for exposure

give them the license to be the main stars not side chicks,
supporting the supporting stars,
the dark skinned latinos aren't light enough,
the darker skinned blacks aren't aesthetic enough
they're not godly enough,
even though I heard before that god made them first.

left them in the earth to grow their roots and they reached all over.
they are the ones not allowed the roles except
maids and gardeners and gangsters and prisoners

the ones with broken english or no english
and five minute screen time
or the loyal doorman or cook in a run down shop.
jokes are made on their thick tongue
but learning two languages is more than i can even do right now.
but no stories on why or how they got there and
that others are successful in the country.

curvy, big ass and light skinned latinas
and black girls in the main roles are a start.
Let's also give the indigenous, the afro latinas,
the ebony skinned black girls
the spotlight to show you that we
are a part of the culture too and
it's not all spicy mamis and juicy pussies
and fat thighs and double d's.

we are more than sex symbols, maids, and gangsters.
we are so much more.

first day

on my first day of work,
i wonder if i will have to direct students to hide under desks
tell them it'll be ok if they just listen to us,
do what we say and you'll make it home.

will i see my teacher's brains fly and fall;
confetti shreds and lips sucked out by a bullet?

will i be able to come home myself, say
see you later grandma
every morning
thank her in the evenings for making my lunch.

i make sure to hug her every time and
tell my brothers and sister
have a good day
when they rush out the car.
but what i mean is,
please make it another day.

tu reina

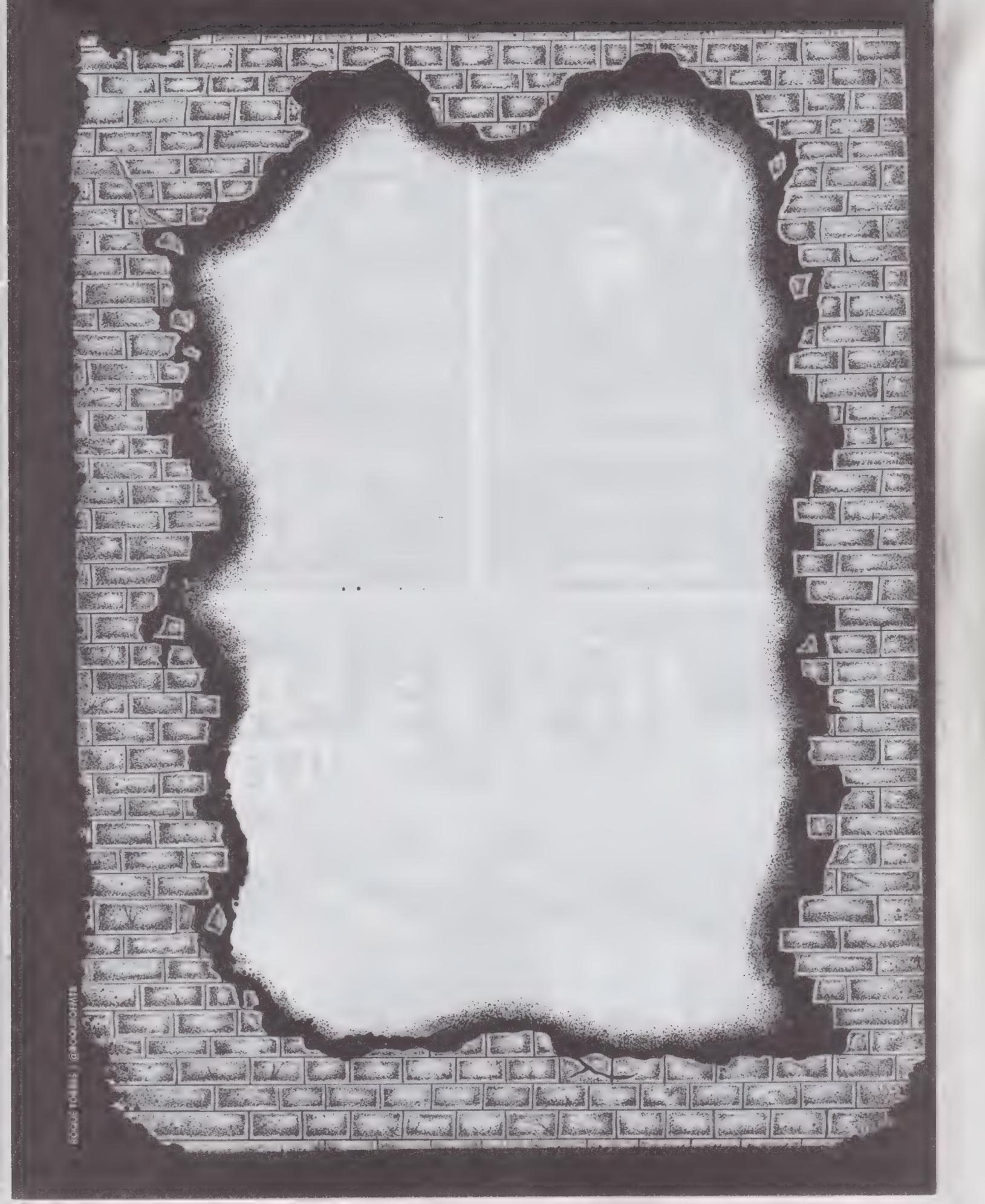
i had a godmother once.
she would get me the expensive things my parents couldn't
she worked the same job since i was a baby
her uniform a part of her skin now and
her smell, i almost forget it now
her mood swings, i must have got them from her
my anger is big but my letting go is wider
"bi polar" my youngest sister calls me, not knowing that's not the
definition but it's the word that works when we don't know how
easily someone
can call you names
then smile and want your love, want to cling to it,
mi tia was my other mother, besides grandma
but she couldn't protect me from the things
my mother didn't and couldn't
i'm not angry about that
i just wish she didn't shut me out as easily,
over a year ago, as i did her.
abandoned me,
her reina.

existence

having an addict for a parent
makes you wonder
if adults can be trusted
then when you're an adult,
you can't be trusted either.

-Andrea Ramos
@writtenbyairamos





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THE DINGHOLE REPORTS

RHYTHM CHICKEN

America is perverse.

Systemic Procedural Gruesomeness

Here it is; the end of May. Just a few days ago I had a pretty good idea what this column was going to be about, and now recent events have yet again sent me back to the chicken coop to rethink and recluck. Yes, here we are two months later. America recently reached 100,000 deaths due to COVID-19. Many of us are wearing masks, trying to behave and do the right thing. Many are not.

Not too long ago we all saw the image of a cop murdering George Floyd by kneeling on his neck while he was on the ground in handcuffs. As a matter of human decency, this is sickeningly shocking to many of us, and many of us are not going to just ignore this event. Unsurprisingly, the orange twitty-tantrum in the White House is using this topic to divide the country further. Many major cities across America had curfews last night. The “president” went golfing, hoping not to injure his twitty finger. This month I do not even want to wonder what condition the world will be in two months from now, or even next week.

At first I was going to write about how lucky I am to live in this weird little corner of the world. It’s a very rural peninsula jutting out into Lake Michigan which is usually a ghost town all winter and spring. Honestly, the pandemic did not drastically change many lives up here. Quarantine living? We call that the off-season. To tell the truth, the first time I learned of an actual acquaintance of mine becoming horribly ill with the virus was through online messaging with Designated Dale. That’s when it first became personal to me. I’m greatly relieved to know he’s doing much better.

Then little old Green Bay, just down at the base of this weird little peninsula, became one of the fastest growing hotspots for the virus in the country. It no longer feels so far away. Then, the Wisconsin Supreme Court overturned our governor’s stay-at-home order. Wow, real smart there, knuckle-nuts. So, I was going to write about the pandemic from my perspective here amongst the cherry trees and fishing boats. That perspective continues to make me feel guilty.

Then there were major riots in Minneapolis. Cars and buildings got torched. Good friends were posting pics of burnt out

areas of their own neighborhoods. Many folks are horrified that a cop could kneel on a handcuffed man’s neck, effectively lynching him. I was horrified by the image and equally horrified by the other cops standing there seemingly bored with the situation. Was it really that normal for them? They did not seem disturbed by it at all. I just learned that kneeling on a suspect’s neck is accepted procedure in Minnesota. That is seriously fucked up. They’re trained to do that. Systemic procedural gruesomeness. Procedural murder.

Many folks are utterly aghast that people could dare to loot a Target store. When you’re more shocked that a heartless corporation lost the tiniest fraction of their wealth than you are that a human heart was choked of oxygen, that’s seriously fucked up. I’ve read about some shop owners who have had their stores smashed, looted, and burned, only to respond by saying, “Let it burn. It’s for a good reason.” Target? Their insurance will replace their square plastic castle.

The same folks who were saying the Coronavirus is a hoax and marching on state capitols with machine guns demanding their right to a haircut are now complaining that protestors are not social distancing. America is perverse.

The next night there were riots in many major cities, and now curfews are set in them. Now I see images of stormtrooper robocop squads marching through residential streets and shooting rubber bullets at people calmly sitting on their front porches. The guy currently holding the position of POTUS says, “When the looting starts, the shooting starts.” Seriously, I’m afraid to say that America couldn’t get worse, because I know as soon as I say it, it will.

As a coping mechanism, allow me to move on to a completely meaningless topic which has been a welcome distraction for me the last few weeks: celebrities. The very first time I met one of these rare creatures was when I was a fledgling five-year-old Chicklet. My oldest sister was working at a restaurant in Green Bay owned by Packer legend Ray Nitschke. My older brothers and I joined our father one day to go pick up our sister from work and there he was. When on

the field, ol’ number 66 was tough as nails. In person he was a gentle giant. He sat down and chatted with us for a while, signed some pictures, and was a real down-to-earth guy.

When I was about seventeen and working at McDonald’s, a new mental health facility was opening up nearby. They were having a grand opening celebration and the main draw was Canadian actor Alan Thicke. I was biking home from work in my dorky McDonald’s uniform and thought it might be worth a chuckle to meet the guy. I walked in and there he was, live and in person. After a short wait in line I shook his hand and said, “Very nice to meet you, Mr. Thicke!” He noticed my work uniform and said, “I’ll take a Big Mac with fries and an apple pie!” Everyone nearby chuckled. I excitedly told him I’d get right on that, walked out the door, and biked home.

During my college years while working at the record store I once got to ring up Packer quarterback and jeans spokesperson Brett Favre. He bought a stack of not-so-great CDs and then asked for the nearest garbage can so he could spit out his chewing tobacco. He wasn’t really a jerk, but he certainly was no Ray Nitschke.

Then I briefly met Katie Couric once in Rome. She was shooting some news piece about gelato out front of a cafe. A small group of American tourists, the only folks who knew who she was, were gathered around watching. When it was done people slowly dispersed so I walked up and said, “Good morning Katie.” She glanced at me and replied, “Yes, morning.” She was no Alan Thicke.

Lately Mrs. Hen and I have been dawdling around YouTube just before bed each night. We’ve gone down a few Nardwuar rabbit holes, which is always a wild ride. His interviews with Henry Rollins and Ian MacKaye are rather captivating. Those got me thinking about the debatable concept of “punk rock” celebrities. Of course there’s Sid Vicious and Billie Joe, the real made-for-magazines types. Then there’s Ian and Henry.

The first time I saw Fugazi was in Milwaukee. During their set Brendan the drummer was having a problem and asked



SHANE MILNER | @SCANNERPUNK

Seriously, I'm afraid to say that America couldn't get worse, because I know as soon as I say it, it will.

if anyone had a drum key. Being a wide-eyed teen punk drummer I tossed him my house key and drum key on the same ring. Ian looked down at me and said, "Do you *always* carry a drum key with you?" I told him that it's always with me. Ian then told me it was a good habit. On the way home that night my carload of friends were saying, "Whoa, Ian said you have a good habit!"

Three nights later Fugazi played their first-ever show in Green Bay. I worked up the courage to approach Ian with a question. I asked if he was a fan of *my* favorite band at the time, The Dickies. He sort of hemmed and hawed before very diplomatically replying, "Well, I'm not their *biggest* fan... but they have this song called 'Give It Back.' It goes something like, 'One day I was walking to school / I saw these bullies and they thought they were cool / They put me down and they pushed me around / They stole my books and they called me a clown / Give it back!'

[pause] I can get behind those lyrics." I smiled and said, "Yeah, I like that one too."

A couple years later Rollins Band was playing in Green Bay. The little Nardwuar in me approached Henry with the same question. "Mr. Rollins, are you a fan of that band The Dickies?" He very matter-of-factly said, "No." It wasn't exactly mean, but it didn't exactly invite a follow-up question. I just said, "Okay" and walked away. He was no Alan Thicke.

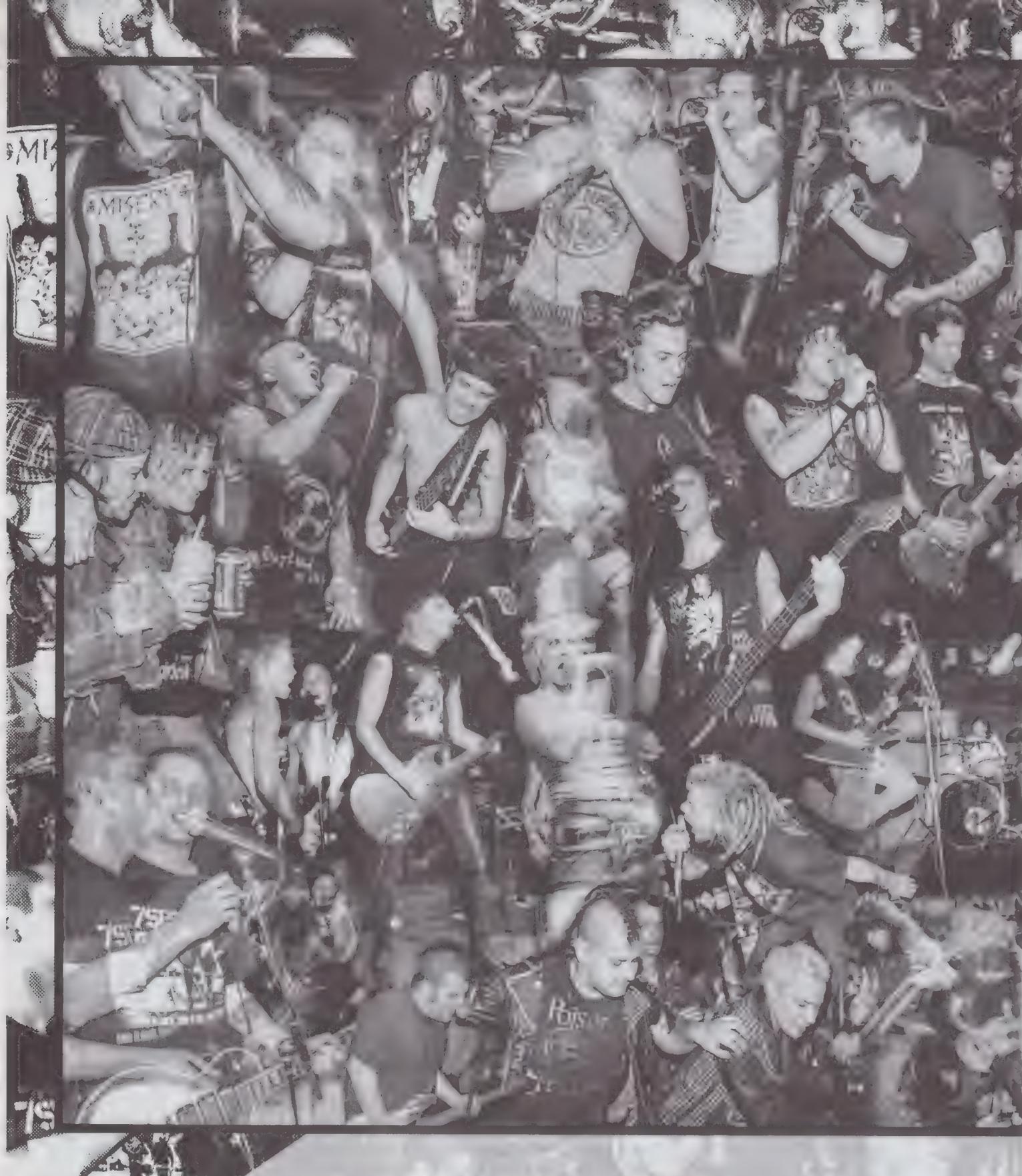
I've met a few other minor celebrities in this life, but who do I want to meet before I'm six feet under? Probably Nardwuar. If I ever do we can talk about Alan Thicke!

Dinghole Report #175: Quarantined Quickie Quagmire! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #737)

As soon as the country went into lockdown and in-person live music

was drastically squelched, social media suddenly became the official music venue of the quarantine. Within a week it seemed everybody with a guitar and an iPhone was throwing their music onto the interwebs. Now I know what their living rooms look like! After a good month of that hoosh-wash I thought it was a good time to celebrate Easter by again showing the world my basement. This time I made an online announcement a few days prior, giving everyone the heads up on the forthcoming Easter Sunday Cluck-a-palooza! The hype was monumental! The anticipation was thicker than Alan! The worldwide, mega-holiday concert lasted fifty-six seconds! Always leave 'em wanting more, if they even wanted any at all.

—Rhythm Chicken



Chris Boarts Larson Photo Column

Chris Boarts Larson, slugandlettuce.net | fb.me/slugandlettuce



In Solidarity with Minneapolis

From the first time I heard the band Misery or saw the band Destroy, I've felt connected to the MPLS scene and the blistering, throttling, thundering punk and hardcore that comes from this cold, dark northland of tundra warriors. Those long, dark winters gave them plenty of time to be active, creative, and busy—and those who partied hard, got up early, and worked just as hard. Profane Existence, Havoc Records, Extreme Noise Records, and the Triple Rock have been at the heart of the MPLS punk scene. Most of the people who I've known for the past thirty years (wow, it really has been that long!) are still at it. They're active and involved with social justice activism and their local community. They're also punk as fuck.

Bands pictured here in this collage are Destroy, State Of Fear, Hellspawn, Civil Disobedience, Disrespect, Damage Deposit, Resolve, Dillinger 4, Assrash, Code 13, Misery, Cognitive Dissonance, and the Menstrual Tramps. The photos start in 1990 at ABC No Rio and span through the 2009 in RVA with some Philly shows in between. It's certainly only a small cross section of bands that represent MPLS, but there are some great bands and wonderful people there. Cheers ya'll for still being tundra warriors who take care of your people and your community and never give up the fight. Even with all that the Twin Cities has lost, the MPLS punx will all keep going fighting strong!

—Chris Boarts Larson
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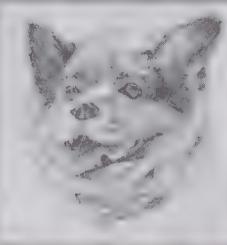
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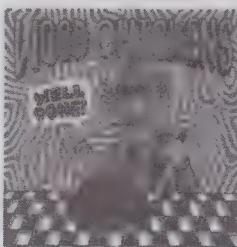
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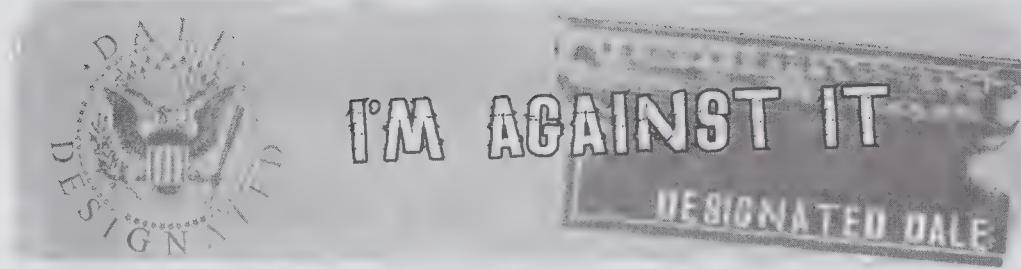
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RESIST!

"SEE? DID I NOT MAKE
IT GREAT AGAIN?"

#9





It felt like gorilla soldiers from *Planet of the Apes* setting up camp in my lungs.

COVID-19 Almost Killed Me

I got socked hard between the eyes with the COVID-19 plague this past March. The weird thing is, my wife Yvonne had suddenly fallen ill with a fever and upset stomach, and when her fever was gone three days later, my temperature came out swinging like a methed-up chimp on March 18. Yvonne's symptoms continued for the next week: a residual cough with an odd sensation, and a few instances of low-grade fever. Then she was fine. I wasn't as lucky for the next two months.

The reason why we're certain she had a COVID encounter is because she was at home with me the entire time I was home from work on quarantined extended sick leave and experienced no relapse or re-infection. She even got tested a couple of weeks later and it came back negative. Being that there's no patient zero with this garbage, Yvonne could've picked up the virus traveling for work a few weeks before, and my brush with the Corona bastard could've been from work at my outpatient pharmacy or even strolling through the aisles of a fucking grocery store looking for my bread. Pointing fingers at an infective culprit is damn near impossible.

From the day I got sick, I had a continuous fever for almost two solid weeks. This shit had me sweating in bed with a temperature bouncing in between the high hundreds—along with a steady stream of anxious, hallucinatory-ridden dreams that hardly allowed me any sleep the whole time—most of the time realizing that I wasn't even sleeping, just tripping the fuck out. I could never remember sweating from the tops of my hands and arms up until this point, with my entire body feeling like I had just stepped out of a swimming pool and right into a bed.

Yvonne told me she'd wake up at night to fix my sheets when I'd been asleep for a bit and said she felt the heat radiating off my shoulders, like when you open an oven door and feel the hot blast on your hands. All I remember during those first couple of weeks was trying to put a dent in the fever by maxing out on acetaminophen and Yvonne taking my temperature every hour while icing my head. Another strange thing was the front half of my tongue simultaneously feeling frost-bitten and covered in carbonated bubbles, as well as my sense of smell drifting off and on. 'Fucked' would be a fair assessment of my situation during this time, and that's putting it mildly.

Three days into my fever, Yvonne was able to get a phone consultation with a doctor and I got an order placed for a COVID-19 test, due to the fact that my symptoms weren't looking like a regular influenza situation, not to mention the Tamiflu I had been taking wasn't doing anything. On March 22, I went down to my work's urgent care triage to get tested. The good part was that it was a spit test and not the current foot-long swab tests, being the initial COVID-19 tests were being outsourced from my facility. The bad part is that I had to wait nine days for my results from the test. The days that followed while waiting for my results were spent trying to calm my fever down, as well as a trip to the ER to get my chest X-rayed, being this fuckface virus likes to settle into people's lungs, and I was beginning to feel it setting up camp. Actually, it felt like gorilla soldiers from *Planet of the Apes* setting up camp in my lungs, squeezing the air out of 'em with their damn dirty ape paws, causing me to get super winded and have cough attacks just from walking ten feet from my bed to the bathroom.

The following day I learned from my X-ray that I had developed bilateral pneumonia, a common trait amongst COVID-19 positive patients. Fuck. Pneumonia affects one lung, while bilateral pneumonia (also known as double pneumonia) affects both of your lungs, which can land you in the ICU rather quickly, depending on how aggressive your case is. So, not only is it dangerous to begin with, but add COVID-19 to this dumpster fire and you can understand how some people end up on a ventilator.

The doctor put me on a prescription of Levaquin, one of the stronger antibiotics usually dispensed to patients who have bacterial infections, and three days later on March 31, I got the test results back that I was indeed positive. Double fuck. After finishing the seven days of Levaquin, my breathing wasn't getting worse, but it definitely wasn't getting better, so we called an MD on our work's phone consultation line to explain what was happening. He told me that because I was coming up on the third week of my COVID-19 illness and that my respiratory situation wasn't improving, he strongly advised going back to the ER, due to the fact that our outpatient clinics and urgent care locations wouldn't see me in person because of my positive status.

We drove back down to the ER on April 7 and got checked out. Temperature, blood pressure, oxygen saturation—all good. But after I got another chest X-ray, I was informed that the main MD at the ER also wanted to run a complete blood panel, as well as drop two bags of IV antibiotics into my veins, telling me there was a good chance that I might have to be admitted into the hospital. I started to get really concerned, not knowing what the X-ray comparisons looked like and was wondering if I was actually gonna be admitted.

They stuck me in an ER isolation room, and between getting my blood thoroughly checked out, the two antibiotics dumped into me, the X-rays getting compared, and all the other notes with my case checked out, the doctor gave me the results just over five hours later. The hours laid up in that isolation room all by myself gave me plenty of time to think about everything and everyone in my life. There was a serious possibility this shit was trying to kill me. I'm not gonna lie, the uncertainty was unnerving and it fucking spooked me. I suddenly had a funny vision in my head of Lemmy on the other side, with a lit Marlboro Red dangling out his mouth, holding a Jack & Coke in one hand and nudging Jesus with his other, telling him "It's not his time, see? Get him back on course." Then I envisioned my father, Joey Ramone, and my childhood friend Todd walk up to Jesus on the other side, all telling him that Lemmy was right, it wasn't my time. I actually started to laugh out loud, and it helped calm me down.

Thankfully, my doctor wasn't going to admit me into the hospital. My blood panel was strong across the board and my vitals were holding the same—excellent for someone in my condition. Although there were a few spots of increased inflammation on the new X-ray, the one from the last visit pretty much looked the same. The doc went on, explaining that as strong as my body was looking, the virus was trying its best to keep my own immuno-warriors from fucking it off, but because of the length of my illness, it appeared I was just beginning to get over the other side of this mountain of shit. The two bags of antibiotics were mainlined in as support soldiers for my immuno-warriors, in hopes that they both would aid in the fight. The doctor then told me that although I wasn't completely outta



JAMES SPOONER | @SPOONERNOFUN

I want to make clear that I've never been as sick in my whole fifty years on this earth than what I've experienced with this creepy COVID carnival of horrors.

the woods yet, I should start seeing some light between the branches soon. He was super adamant about me resting up until my breathing got back to normal.

In the following weeks, I started to feel more like myself. My breathing started to slowly improve since the last ER visit; the windedness and hacking cough trying its damnedest to stick around due to the remnants of these little COVID bastards. I continued to be off from work through May 17, being I'm considered a frontline healthcare worker and couldn't return until I had no symptoms for three solid days. I also was tested again to confirm I was COVID-19 negative, as well.

Even though I put her through the emotional wringer with all of this, I want to say that Yvonne's been my guardian angel throughout this frightening rollercoaster ride of illness, the same as she's always been for me the past sixteen-plus years we've been

together. No exception here. She rules and I love her more than she'll ever know.

The scariest part about this virus is there are people who are infected with little to no symptoms, and that's frightening enough, but then there's the percentile of these infected people who are going about their daily business, with complete fuck-all attitudes, not protecting themselves one bit. Basically being a bunch of Johnny Appleseeds of death. It's bad enough with all of the random infections happening, but with people like my Ma who has a compromised health situation due to the cancer that nearly killed her (and she will be eighty this year) as well as my sister who's suffered from asthma since we were kids, this COVID shit isn't an option. It just isn't.

If everyone acted as though they had this virus and took the proper protection protocol seriously when having to go out

(having to go out, *not* wanting to), it'd put the spreading of this plague in a holding pattern and buy science some time to put the bite on this horrible situation. I just can't wrap my head around the mentality of the people who aren't taking this shit as seriously as they should. This is about people, all of us, and they need to keep that in mind.

I know there are others who were/are in an even worse place than me with this bastard virus, but I want to make clear that I've never been as sick in my whole fifty years on this earth than what I've experienced with this creepy COVID carnival of horrors, physically and mentally.

With a grateful heart, I hope this finds all of you and yours well.

—Designated Dale
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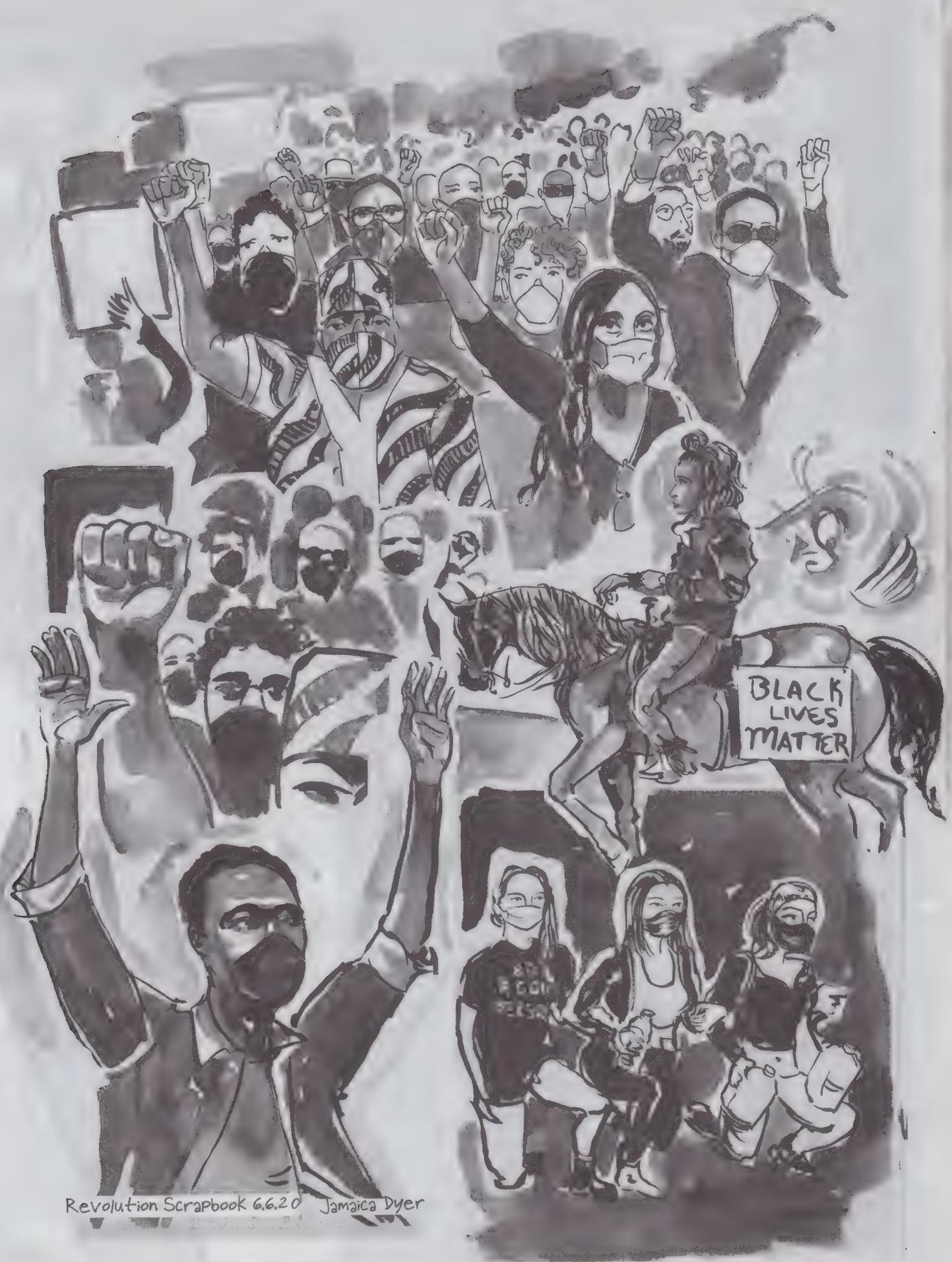
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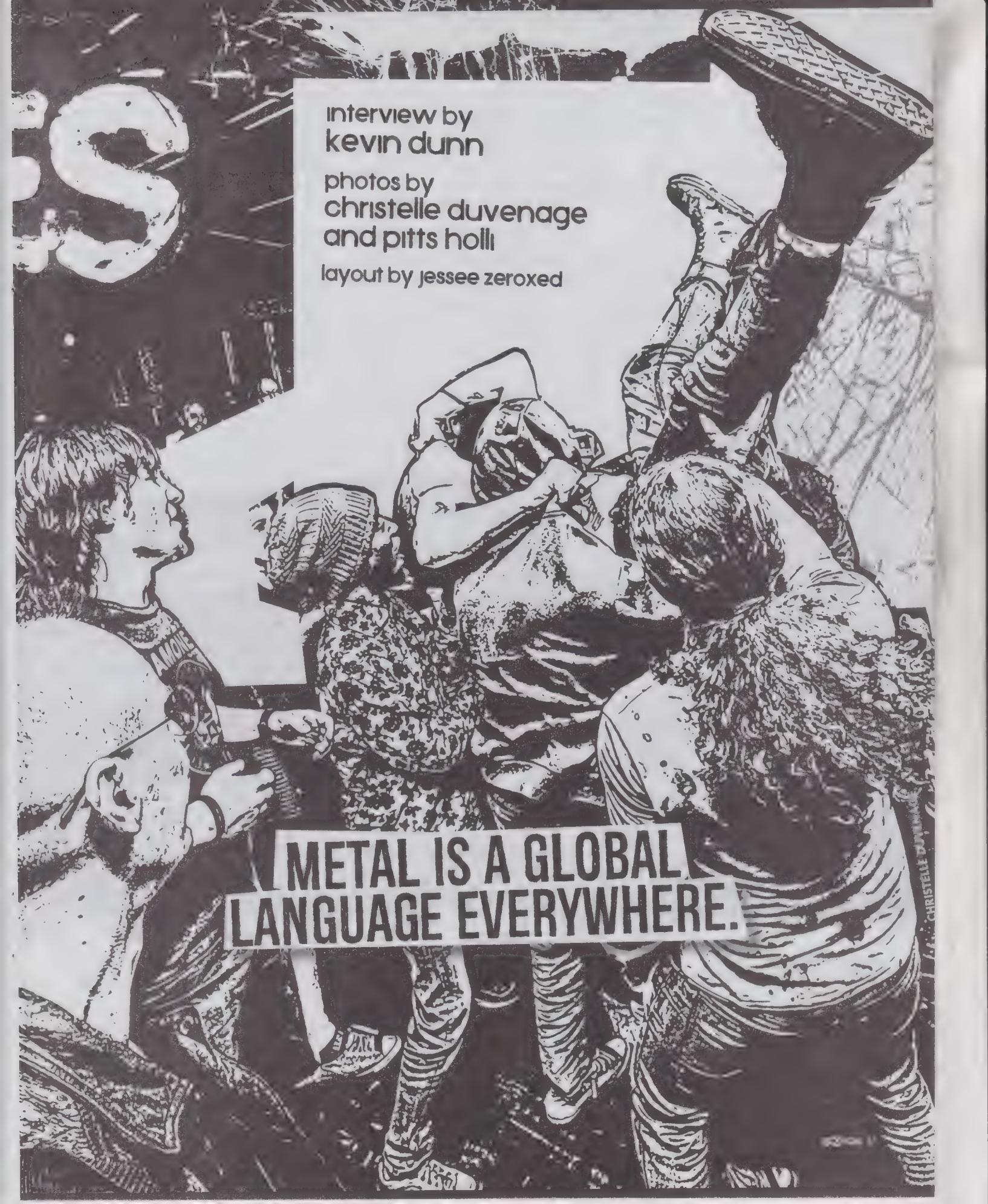
IN RETURN, AUDIENCES FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO VIETNAM HAVE GOTTEN TO BASK IN THE BRILLIANCE OF THEIR RAMSHACKLE APPROACH TO PUNK. MUSICALLY, IMAGINE IF TODD CONGELIERE HAD YOUNGER SIBLINGS WHO FORMED A BAND AFTER A LIFETIME OF BEING FORCE-FED F.Y.P AND TOYS THAT KILL.

YEAH, THEY'RE THAT GOOD.

I INTERVIEWED TIM, MARK, AND JOEL OVER ZOOM IN THE EARLY DAYS OF COVID-19. SACIA COULDN'T BE THERE BECAUSE SHE WAS WORKING HER SHIFT AT THE ER. A FEW DAYS LATER, TIM GOT HIT BY A CAR BEFORE HIS OWN ER SHIFT. HE ENDURED THE TWO BIGGEST FEARS ER WORKERS HAVE—BEING A TRAUMA PATIENT IN THEIR OWN ER AND HAVING ALL OF THEIR CLOTHES CUT OFF BY COWORKERS. HE'S RECOVERED, DOING FINE, AND THEY'RE ALREADY TALKING ABOUT THEIR NEXT OVERSEAS TOUR.

THEIR DEDICATION TO PROMOTING UNDERREPRESENTED PUNKS AND PUNK SCENES AROUND THE WORLD IS EVIDENT THROUGHOUT THIS INTERVIEW, AND, IN THAT SPIRIT, WE'RE INCLUDING PART OF AN INTERVIEW THAT SACIA DID WITH WE DID THIS, TWO DIY PUNK ORGANIZERS IN SOUTH AFRICA.





interview by
kevin dunn

photos by
christelle duvenage
and pitts holli

layout by jessee zeroxed

METAL IS A GLOBAL
LANGUAGE EVERYWHERE.

Kevin: We're doing this interview remotely due to the coronavirus pandemic and Sacia, the drummer, is not with us. You want to explain why?

Tim: Yes, she's an ER nurse. She works in the pediatric ER in town so she's working today. I work in the ER as well so we're all working overtime.

Kevin: So you two are on the frontline. Mark, do you still work in ER?

Mark: No, I used to be a paramedic in Portland and I worked in the same ER as Tim for a couple of years. But I'm now a design researcher and I work for the City of Austin in Texas.

Tim: I think we've got about twenty or thirty, so it's not that many. It's weird because Washington's got so much above us, and California's got a bunch. It just hasn't happened yet. We'll know in the next week, or two. I think it should start to ramp up.

Kevin: Yeah, when this interview comes out, it's going to be a very different country. The other side of this, it's going to be super weird. How about you guys, Mark and Joel?

Mark: I work for the city and there's a lot of work that we're doing in the COVID response. My department is a service design lab for the city, and we're putting together an emergency food distribution network right now. We're interviewing folks to learn how to make that distribution network better. There's a ton of work for us. It's all remote right now.

Joel: My company is all remote anyways, so not much has changed in my personal life. The company itself is an ecommerce platform that focuses primarily on artists and small creative businesses. If anything, we've seen an increase in, not sales, but signups and stuff. Big Cartel recently announced plans to donate \$100k in small grants to help out with immediate needs

with Sacia, the drummer who I met in the ER, called Cafeteria Dance Fever. It was around the same time we started Hovercraft Records to put out Mark and Joel's band from Bowling Green, Ohio called Bullet Teeth. That was our first release. Started the label to put out my [laughs] brother's band. Joel and Mark moved out to Portland, probably about a year after that.

Kevin: What brought the four of you together to start playing together?

Tim: Cafeteria Dance Fever went for probably seven years, with about five European tours, doing the Western European circuit. After that band ended, me, Mark, Joel, and Sacia just decided to start another band focusing on more short songs. The idea was to tour in countries that weren't the norm for other bands to go.

Joel: The way I remember, the whole impetus for the band was that Tim was playing with our



FIRST SHOW WAS A TEN-MINUTE SET AT BEERLAND. WE JUMPED ON A PLANNED PARENTHOOD BENEFIT THAT WAS ALSO A BACHELOR PARTY

Kevin: What about you, Joel?

Joel: I'm just a douchebag tech bro. Work for a company called Big Cartel.

Kevin: How is the coronavirus affecting you all?

Tim: We're working more than ever before. [laughs] We're going in a lot longer, staying longer. And all this stuff about running out of gloves and masks is pretty real.

Kevin: How many cases are there in Portland so far?

like rent and food. In case anyone out there has a store on Big Cartel and needs some help, they should look into that.

Kevin: You guys formed in 2016, but you've all been in bands before that and you've also known each other. Tim and Mark, you guys are brothers. What's the lineage of the band up to forming in 2016?

Tim: I moved out to Portland down from Seattle, roundabout way from Los Angeles, from Ohio, but I started a band down there

friends in Hey Lover and they had decided to go on hiatus. And you had a friend or coworker opening a brewery in Santiago, right?

Tim: Yeah, I had a friend in Chile.

Joel: He was like, "You guys should bring your band down," but since Hey Lover didn't exist anymore, Tim was like, "Why don't we start a band and go to Chile?" That was the beginning of it.

Kevin: Were you all still in Portland or were you spread out by then?

Joel: Tim was visiting Austin. He and Sacia were in Portland, and Mark and I were in Austin.

Kevin: As The Dumpies, you guys have never lived in the same city at the same time?

Joel: We all lived in Portland, but not as The Dumpies.

Kevin: You decided to move away and then form a band? That's fucking stupid. [laughter]

Tim: Yes.

Kevin: That was in 2017, but your first show was at the Beerland in Austin?

Mark: First show was a ten-minute set at Beerland. We jumped on a Planned

Mark: Yeah. [laughs]

Kevin: And then you headed to Chile?

Tim: Yeah. That friend with the brewery had no connections to shows. He just said, "Come down." We were just like, "All right, we'll do it." The beauty of booking tours now is it's done mostly through emails and Facebook, particularly for those countries. We just met some people who helped us set up shows all up and down the country.

Joel: We never ended up playing in that brewery. [laughter]

Kevin: What were the venues?

Joel: We were playing mostly a lot of community centers and squats. A lot of DIY venues. There's a healthy DIY scene in Chile.

Kevin: Did that surprise you when you got there?

Joel: I don't know if it surprised me. It was definitely enlightening. I don't remember what I was expecting.

Tim: I went with an open mind. One show

Especially coming out of the tour in Chile where everyone was just so excited. Everyone just wanted to do the show and hang out and have fun. It was such a stark contrast between that and going to Japan where we couldn't even get booked on certain shows because we didn't play the right specific kind of punk. We still ended up having a good time and we met some people who threw some really awesome shows for us. Shout out to AliceTales. But it wasn't nearly as gratifying as Chile.

Tim: It wasn't as authentic, I think.

Kevin: Then you followed that up with going to Argentina. How was that different than Chile?



Parenthood Benefit that was also a bachelor party. [laughter]

Mark: It was double booked, but that's why I love Beerland. Rest in peace.

Kevin: Rest in peace.

Mark: It was amazing, because it was a place where anyone who emailed them could play and those places are pretty rare in Austin now.

Kevin: It would host Planned Parenthood and a bachelor party? That's beautiful double billing. [laughter]

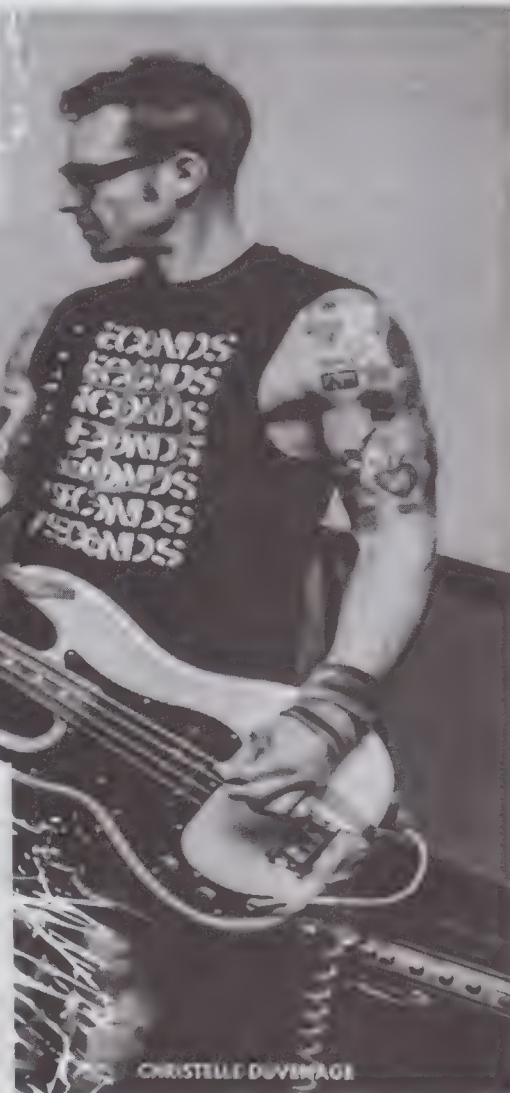
was in an abandoned train car, a couple of squats were borrowing electricity from the neighbors. It's pretty varied.

Kevin: How much money did you lose on that tour? [laughter]

Tim: Several thousand. [laughter] When you go to France or Netherlands—particularly Norway and Sweden—they pay you pretty well and they put you up, they'll give you food or drinks. Chile, Argentina, Vietnam, they don't have the money to do that and that's obviously not why we're doing it. It's more to meet people and see what the scene is like.

Kevin: In 2017, you followed up the Chile tour with Japan, which has a more established infrastructure for touring. Did you start doing everything DIY and organizing it yourselves?

Joel: We tried to do it. We did do it DIY, just asking bands and going through. The main takeaway from Japan was that touring developed countries with established music industries kind of sucks. [laughter] It felt like doing a tour in the U.S. or doing a tour in Europe, where there's tons of middlemen, and the whole thing is about trying to scrimp as much money as you can out of it on all sides.



Joel: I think they're pretty similar.

Mark: They love the Rolling Stones. [laughter]

Mark: They have a pretty healthy rock'n'roll culture. In Patagonia we're playing more rural places, where a lot of the bands we play with were metal. That's something we've seen, metal is a global language everywhere. I wish punk was as dispersed.

We end up playing with a lot of metal bands in the south and then the farther north we went, things started to get more punk, post-punk, and stuff like that—and the political

causes became more prominent. Argentina was going through an abortion vote that was about to be voted on. Everyone was wearing these green scarves to have solidarity with women's rights. The further north we went, the more anti-patriarchy graffiti and anti-Pope graffiti we saw.

Tim: The Chile tour was pretty political, too. More than half the shows were benefits for the Mapuche people. One thing we didn't see in Japan or in Western Europe was political connections to the shows. In Chile and Argentina, pretty much every show had a political reason for being hosted, which Japan didn't have.

Joel: A lot of the shows, especially in Chile, they had political underpinnings because they had to. There was a very strong anti-police sentiment in all the shows. You can just feel there's a lot more aggression, which is a stark contrast again to Europe where a lot of those squats have been there for twenty, thirty years or whatever and have established relationships with the local government.

Kevin: The next year, you guys went to Asia. You hit Malaysia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand. I'm curious as to the differences between the Asian countries and the South American countries, and then those four Asian countries being distinct from each other. How did you notice the variety there between the scenes?

Joel: That was one thing that took me by surprise, and I feel a little bit naive about it, personally. I'm only speaking for myself, too. The countries in general are so packed in you'd think that it would be a different shade of the same thing, but each country was wildly different.

It definitely felt extremely DIY. Everyone was putting a show together themselves, promoting it themselves, and there wasn't a whole lot of concern about money changing hands. They were organized as fuck. It might have just been the people who we ended getting in touch with. When I was doing the booking for it, I cast a wide net, and then narrowed it down, based off of the responses people gave me. Booking that one, I talked to maybe ten or fifteen different people, and almost every single person was, "You need to talk to this specific guy," who is, apparently, the person you talk to if you're going to tour Southeast Asia.

Not to say that shows in South America aren't well-organized, but this had less of a community, everybody coming together and doing a thing informally. It was much more like, "We do this all the fucking time, and this is the circuit we've established."

Tim: I think the biggest difference was probably Vietnam. I had more fun in Thailand and Cambodia. In Vietnam, I don't know if there's some American colonial influence, but their scene seemed more rigorous. They seemed more set up like a traditional American scene, whereas the other countries were just making it up on their own, because they didn't have that history, or that direct American influence, particularly in Malaysia.

Joel: I should also mention that I got the initial contacts for Southeast Asia from the person who hooked us up the most in Argentina. All of these are still connected to the same DIY networks.

Tim: Argentina came from Chile. We toured Chile, and these guys are, "Talk to these guys in Argentina." Argentina, they're, "Talk to these guys in Vietnam." Pretty amazing.

Joel: That's ultimately the most gratifying thing. We throw all these platitudes around all the time about the DIY spirit, community building, and all that. It sounds like something you say to everybody. But seeing how connected that scene is, there really still exists in punk a healthy DIY ethic. People definitely give a shit, and will go way out of their way, sometimes financially and time-wise, and to use their resources to help you out. I don't have a lot of faith in humanity, but it's these times that I feel it's not all total shit. [laughter]

Kevin: I've had the same kind of experience in terms of these key players, or nodal points, in the global network. But while they know each other, they've often never met each other. The touring bands are the ones who have the privilege of going and meeting all these key people. They all know each other, but they're not ever together.

Joel: Yeah, we had to put an unofficial moratorium on after shows being, "You guys should come up to the U.S. so we can book a tour for you," because we realized, a lot of these people in Chile, they're never going to have the money to do that.

Mark: And the visa, too. It was a learning experience for me. I didn't know that people from certain countries can't come. The U.S. won't let them do it. They have to show tickets to Disneyland and a return plane ticket before they even get granted the opportunity. Before I realized that, I was telling all the bands, "Come for South By Southwest, we'll do an underground thing. We'll hook you up." I had to stop saying that because not only do they not have the money, they're not even allowed in.

Kevin: The privilege of us being able to go and partake in these scenes with the knowledge that they'll never be able to come to the U.S. or to Western Europe.

Tim: That's something I've always struggled with is trying to be cognizant of your privilege and your history. Another option is you don't go. The balance between going, being respectful, trying to learn, and trying to bring something—but at the same time being aware of what you have the benefit of doing. Not everybody has that.

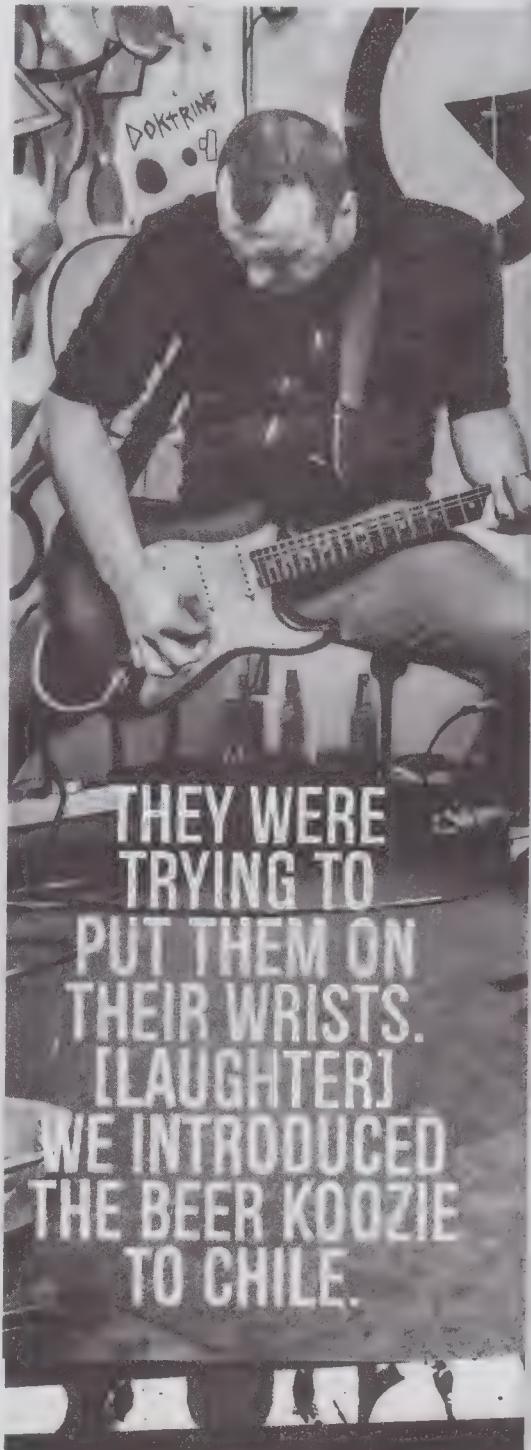
Joel: Totally. We're acutely aware of the extreme privilege that we're afforded, being able to go to these far-off places and spend multiple weeks playing super sloppy, arguably bad punk. [laughter] I don't know if it's ultimately a narcissistic exercise. All I know is that it feels good and it feels positive to engage and be involved in moments where people from different places are sharing an experience and their resources. Not for the sake of climbing the social ladder and filling some fucked up ambition borne out of late stage capitalism or whatever. It's just something that feels pure.

Tim: Playing music in those places feels way more authentic than playing shows in the U.S. or in Europe because you don't have some booker or the soundman upset because, "Oh,

we don't have enough people in the door. We didn't make enough at the bar." They don't give a shit about that stuff there. They just want to play music, and it's the reason we keep doing it.

Kevin: I'm assuming that they're super grateful that The Dummies are showing up, that you've come all that way. Do you guys feel any responsibility to bring stuff with you to help out?

Tim: Merch stuff? We always end up giving it away. It's pay-what-you-want kind of thing. If somebody's got a buck to buy a cassette, we'll do that. We were learning about backlining, but when we were in Argentina or in Chile, we



bought a bass amp to do the tour with when we landed. Then at the last show, we just donated it to the community center, and they were just stoked to have a nice amp. Generally, the merch is pretty much free. [laughter]

Kevin: You're not taking vinyl because no one's got access to record players.

Tim: It's interesting learning who uses cassettes, who uses CDs. CDs were big in South Africa and nobody's really doing vinyl down there. Whereas when we're in France, there are people who would refuse to buy anything but vinyl.

Kevin: Vinyl is basically a North American, Western European luxury good. Because vinyl warps in the tropics. [laughter]

Tim: Our biggest mistake was we had beer koozies in Chile, and nobody knew what those were for. They were trying to put them on their wrists. [laughter] We introduced the beer koozie to Chile.

Kevin: That's hilarious. You mentioned South Africa, which you guys just got back from

couple of weeks ago. How was that different from the rest of the tours?

Mark: It was racially the most intense place I've ever been because Apartheid only ended in 1994. You could pretty much feel it everywhere we went. They always say, "It's touchy." Before I went, I was like, "You just don't want to talk about it. That's your copout." After I went there and we went to the Apartheid Museum, we talked to so many people at length about it. I was like, "Wow, this is touchy. Holy shit."

Tim: That's why Shaun and Conley were great. They're very cognizant of that. They will point that out even little things you'd see on the street. They would connect things, showing us where Apartheid is still continuing, but it's more of a financial racism now. It was definitely something which seemed much more prominent than in all the other countries.

Joel: I'm still trying to wrap my head around why it felt so drastically different. Tim was talking about income inequality. It's not that dissimilar to what the situation is here, but there is a different flavor. There's something different about the situation there.

It was a really intense learning experience being there.

Tim: In America, we got this picture of, "Apartheid's gone. Everything's great. Everybody loves each other. We're past that." You go there and it's still raw, and it's still very much a part of the country.

Kevin: Can you just say who those two people are that you were talking about?

Tim: Shaun and Conley from We Did This Records which is a DIY collective throughout the whole country. They put out a lot of politically motivated music, playing in a couple of bands. (See insert of Sacia interviewing Shaun and Conley.)

Kevin: I've been there many times and it's probably my least favorite country to visit because of that income inequality and the institutionalized racism. It's just so in your face and it's so hard to navigate coming from the outside. How is the DIY punk scene dealing with that in South Africa, based on what you guy saw?

Joel: They're just as affected as the rest of the country. In fact, it was a big point of contention. On all these bills we're showing up on, we realized ninety percent of the bands were white. We were talking to Shaun and Conley about it and it's a very segregated scene. There's the Soweto scene and then there's the white scene. Once we realized that was happening, we tried to reach out to a bunch of bands and try to get the shows more integrated—with varying degrees of success—but it was noticeable.

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I can't imagine living and booking shows in a scene like that.

Tim: The openness is what's different in the U.S. In every show there'd be one or two black musicians and people would be, "Oh, there aren't enough black people here," or, "These bands are all white." In the U.S., you don't really say that. We did have a show in Soweto, but we realized that the bill was all white bands. Shaun was saying, "This really isn't that cool. We can't do this."

Joel: The situation there—where a band got sponsored by Red Bull, Converse, or Vans—supposedly, that caused a bunch of infighting within the scene in Soweto. No other bands from the Soweto scene would play with them. We were being advised by Shaun and Conley that it would not be a good look to cross that picket line.

Kevin: You didn't play the show?

Joel: No.

Tim: It's interesting. Vans and Red Bull have started to put a lot of money into the Soweto music scene and it's caused a lot of infighting

Vans are getting a lot out of it and putting very little in. The musicians are squabbling over, like you said, new pairs of shoes and some fancy banners at the back of the stage.

Tim: We'll never have to worry about that. [laughter]

Kevin: You guys are signed on to Red Bull, right? [laughter]

Tim: [sarcastically] Oh yeah.

Kevin: Someone already mentioned the metal scene down in Chile, and I've seen that a lot in Southeast Asia and various places as well, where DIY punk coexists right next to DIY metal scenes. You're all nodding. What do you make of that?

Tim: It's pretty fascinating, because growing up in America, if you're going to be rebellious or write punk music, you mirror a little bit of Minor Threat or something like that. But what we consider classic older punk, from the late '70s or early '80s, isn't there. It's all metal. I don't know where that comes from, but it coexists. In Argentina we played a show where Eyehategod headlined. They would never have

Tim: Yeah. In Chile, I got the same story from a lot of people after shows about when Pinochet's rule ended in the '90s. People would always come up to me and say, "My first three rock shows were Guns N' Roses, Michael Jackson, and Madonna." Everyone kept saying that because when it finally ended, those were the first three bands that came down there and everyone in the country went to those shows. I was like, "Oh, awesome. Yeah, that's fucking cool. I love Guns N' Roses." [laughter]

We have a friend who drove the van in Chile and Argentina. He's a Chilean dude who lives in Austin and he was telling us stories about how you would just have to go to a place and have a secret knock just to dub cassettes of bands you wanted. It was like that for twenty years there and then in the '90s, the music exploded. There's a lot of bands still playing like Guns N' Roses because of that.

Kevin: So interesting. But let's talk about y'all's music and the stuff you guys are doing. You've got five releases, all named



CHRISTELLE DUVENAGE

THE DIY SCENE IN CHILE...
ONE SHOW WAS IN
AN ABANDONED
TRAIN CAR,
A COUPLE OF SQUATS
WERE BORROWING
ELECTRICITY FROM
THE NEIGHBORS.
IT'S PRETTY VARIED.

for the DIY crowd because the band will get signed to Red Bull and then they'll say, "You can only play a Red Bull-sponsored show." The other bands who're DIY are like, "We're not going to deal with this band because they're all corporate now."

I'm trying to look at it with an open mind. It's easy to have a hierarchy when you're the DIY punks in America who are liberal college grads and stuff and are going to be fine no matter what. It's easier to have your ethics. But if you're in a different socioeconomic place and have no money whatsoever, you have no chance to travel and some corporation says, "We're going to help you travel and give you free shoes," you're probably more likely to take it.

Kevin: It's really complicated, especially from the outside, to understand those internal dynamics that are going on when you've got these big corporate sponsorships. I see it happening in Indonesia as well, often with cigarette companies. Of course, Red Bull or

punk bands play with Eyehategod in America, but down there it's all a happy marriage.

Kevin: You guys played a show with Eyehategod?

Tim: Yeah.

Kevin: That's weird. [laughter]

Tim: Definitely weird.

Kevin: Is that the weirdest lineup you've been on?

Mark: Good question. Probably.

Joel: There was also a twenty piece ska band on that show, right?

Mark: Yeah.

Tim: Those guys were from Indonesia or Malaysia. They were called Sir Iyai and it was like this twenty-piece: trumpets, guitars, kind of like Rancid meets The Specials meets The Popes. Fascinating.

Kevin: It's super interesting seeing those influences and I think much of the developing world got their first exposure to independent music in the 1990s with Green Day and Nirvana.

after athletes, and the covers are beautiful ink drawings of these athletes with deformities. Can we psychoanalyze what's going on there?

Tim: We were picking athletes who were losers. Not loser athletes. We started with Bill Laimbeer. He's this thug, but hardworking. He's not the most gifted guy. Then you have Zola Budd. Then Billie Jean King. We like the image of Billie Jean King where she's giving the middle finger to the reporter who was calling her out for being a lesbian. It's this powerful statement for her, and particularly with the women's lib she represented. Zola Budd is the tragic loser hero who tripped Mary Decker Slaney. Not to say loser mentality. An underdog is probably the word I'm looking for.

The artist is our friend Rachel Mulder. She's a friend from Milwaukee who moved out to Portland. She's like our Raymond Pettibon to Black Flag. [laughter]

Mark: When we recorded *Zola Budd*, it was in a cabin in Ariel, Wash., which is in this remote wilderness. One of the big struggles with me



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and the band is getting time off of work. The tours are usually around three weeks. There's a week of prep and practice when we all fly to one place, practice, and then leave. Then there's a week or two when you come back and you're jet lagged. It ends up being a month out of your normal life every time we tour. I wasn't able to go on the Southeast Asia tour because I'd just gotten hired in this job in the city. We had a friend of ours, Jason from Guantanamo Baywatch, to go in my place and play the guitar parts for us.

THERE REALLY STILL EXISTS IN PUNK A HEALTHY DIY ETHIC. PEOPLE DEFINITELY GIVE A SHIT...I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF FAITH IN HUMANITY, BUT IT'S THESE TIMES THAT I FEEL IT'S NOT ALL TOTAL SHIT.

Kevin: That's always a challenge in any band, but you guys just made it super hard on yourselves by being in different time zones. [laughter] How do you pull that off?

Mark: We text videos to each other, playing songs. We learn short snippets of it that way and piece it together through emails. When we get together, about half of it's prewritten, and then half of it happens on the spot.

Kevin: You guys are prolific with your videos, which are these beautiful lo-fi tragedies. [laughter]

Tim: We have some good friends do a lot of them. I always thought music in visuals—whether it's posters or covers or video—it's all part of the message. It's been pretty important to me. With my rudimentary video skills, I'll piece that stuff together.

Kevin: I notice there are only a couple of them in which the band is actually all together.

Tim: It's a lot of trickery. [laughter] For some, Joel and Mark will film snippets in Austin and then me and Sacia film in Portland. It's a lot of trying to navigate around the long distance thing and you do what you can.

Kevin: There is the video for "Naugahyde" where everyone's going by themselves to buy beer from the store and then drinking alone.

Joel: That's the story of The Dumpies right there. [laughter]

Kevin: Who came up with the name?

Joel: Tim.

Tim: Yeah, the origin of the name was being from down in the dumps or this place is a dump. This goes back to the tragic loser or the loser hero, the underdog. When you go to other places, they take it for meaning taking

a shit. In South Africa, little tiny ten-ounce beers are called dumpies. Everybody there thought it was the beers.

Kevin: That's hilarious. It works in all the ways.

Tim: I know.

Kevin: Last thing I want to talk about is when did you guys start Hovercraft Records?

Tim: 2004. We put out Joel and Mark's band Bullet Teeth, and then started doing Portland bands and the Pacific Coast. When we started touring Europe, we started to put out international bands like people we'd met from Spain, France, Germany. That stuff doesn't sell that much here because we don't have great promotion or distribution. It's still DIY. That's been a labor of love, music that I think is important to be out in the world. It's not making money, but I think it's doing what it can to get good artists out there, still going.

Kevin: Keeping the theme going, how much money have you lost running the record label? [laughter]

Tim: \$50,000 maybe. It's been over fifteen years, maybe.

Kevin: If only someone had told your fifteen-



year-old selves how much money you'd be losing going into DIY punk, you might have reconsidered.

Mark: It's worth it.

Tim: Yeah, it's worth it. It's like that scene in *Rebel without a Cause* where they're standing over the edge of the cliff about to play chicken. The one guy says to James Dean, "Why do we do this?" He looks at him and he's like, "You got to do something." I don't know what else I'd do; got to do something. [laughter]



SACIA INTERVIEWS SHAUN AND CONLEY OF WE DID THIS (SOUTH AFRICA)



Sacia: How did you guys get into punk?

Conley: Local zines had a massive impact on exposing us to punk rock, both local and international. Me, growing up in a rural area, even I got a chance and went to my first show when I was fourteen just because of a local zine called *Blunt* that used to put out comps and list gig guides. It changed my life forever! It made everything I loved tangible and attainable.

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Shaun: My cousin Kim was a metal head and when I got my first Walkman at the start of middle school she copied some Nirvana, Green Day, and Face To Face albums for me. The chain stores Look & Listen and CD Warehouse would also stock Epitaph and other biggish label releases. After going to some of my first local shows I also learned about Croak Room Records that was stationed in Pretoria, which used to do mail orders for some local punk records as well as some bands from Canada. Some kids at my high school were also doing distribution for *Profane Existence* magazine.

Sacia: How connected is the South African punk scene to the rest of Africa?

Conley: Numerous bands from the southern parts of Africa do frequent South Africa. Some festivals hosted in neighboring countries like Mozambique and Swaziland have South Africans involved in the organizing as well. Most of the African underground scene is dominated by metal, which we aren't that involved with so I can't offer much more, unfortunately.

Shaun: There was a film produced called *Punk in Africa* that focused on some of the apartheid-era punk bands, then took a massive leap to the big names in early 2000s ska punk, and ended with a few minutes about bands in the rest of Africa. I don't know if any of those bands mentioned are still going or if new ones have popped up. I haven't heard of any since.

From my introduction to the local scene, there has been some sort of a connection with American, European, and Australian scenes. We've had numerous bands tour here on their own steam, from hardcore to crust and garage rock. Many bigger bands tour here with support from festivals like Oppikoppi or from groups like Punk Safari, who existed in the early 2000s and were all about bringing Fat Wreck Chords bands over. When I was in high school in Cape Town, Christian hardcore was massive and church groups were helping little local and overseas bands tour churches and high schools. We even had Underoath here. Though it's debatable whether any of that is "punk"; it was probably the height of people being involved in the scene, whether that be with gig attendance or people making zines and stuff. A number of local punk bands have done European and Southeast Asia tours.

Sacia: Can you explain the split between the Soweto scene and the rest of the country?

Conley: The rest of the scene had a huge jump start on the Soweto punk scene, or at least the one we're familiar with. This established scene enjoys privileges such as fully equipped venues, accessible locations, and active booking agents, to name but a few. In our involvement in Soweto shows, it's amazing to see how any effort for a show or rehearsal always involves family members, neighbors, and friends regardless of the genre which is unfamiliar to the big city scenes. Racism and fear does play a role and keeping these scenes apart, but we've been actively trying to combat that by playing each other's venues and houses. **Shaun:** A few years ago, some friends of ours helped start up Soweto Rock Revolution after hearing about and chatting to folks in Soweto who were into punk and metal. This resulted in the first punk gigs at a skate park by Dube Station. The shows were a mix of acts from Soweto, Jo-burg, and the addition of some touring bands. There was quite a bit of publicity surrounding these shows from the get go, with numerous videos and articles being produced.

Not long after the first handful of shows did we hear about interest in the Soweto scene from the likes of Afro-Punk, and later Red Bull Music, Vans, and Converse. For a little while we had another collaborative effort in Maboneng, a gentrified arts street in town, called Punk Fridays. Unfortunately, the last few Soweto Rock Revolution shows have been a white invasion of Soweto, as the sponsors and corporate interests had made it difficult for the Soweto scene to represent itself there.

As of recently, there's been a bigger fallout between Soweto Skate Society, who manage the prominent Soweto bands, and Soweto Rock Revolution. Currently, we're finding it difficult to collaborate with the Soweto scene due to not wanting to cross battle lines and due to our shows being DIY unsponsored shows where we split the cash made at the door between the bands, with no guarantee or pre-payments.

Sacia: Is there a presence of white nationalists within the South African punk scene, like we see elsewhere like Eastern Europe?

Conley: Yes there is, but I wouldn't say it's proud and in the open. Most people get called out or get ostracized by the scene, so they don't have much of a presence at shows or in bands, but every now and again a right-wing nationalist punk band would show its ugly face. In the '80s, we had

quite a few of them that would wave the flag of the white nationalist party, but I'm proud to say that venues, agents, and bands are all on the same front when it comes to getting rid of this kinda trash.

Shaun: I had the unfortunate experience of playing a show once with a band from Pretoria called Chaos Christ, who I did not know at the time. They turned out to be a Christian chaos punk band who were LARPing as members of the SS. Aside from that, a globally known anarchist author (Michael Schmidt) from Johannesburg who had books published by AK Press, and who had frequented shows, was exposed for being an undercover white nationalist and having a Stormfront account in 2015.

Sacia: What are some of the things bands and punks in the U.S. and Europe can do to help out scenes like yours?

Conley: Just come and visit us! Folks are always welcoming and excited to do things with touring act or fans. Download our mixtapes and open up to what we have going on down here. There's so much talent and unique and interesting expressions of art and music.

Shaun: I think that for many people overseas, there's some aversion towards the idea of a South African punk scene, outside of the recent popularity online regarding the Soweto scene. Leftover Crack, for instance, were flooded with comments like, "Why are you going to white Africa?" when they came here. It's kind of a tricky thing and I think many white people in bands here, especially punk bands, struggle with being white and South African. The legacy of apartheid is still very visible and a lot is unchanged due to the post-apartheid government's devotion to neoliberal capitalism over and above societal and structural change.

Sacia: You guys have a very strong DIY

ethos that seems to intertwine with every

aspect of your life, music, and label.

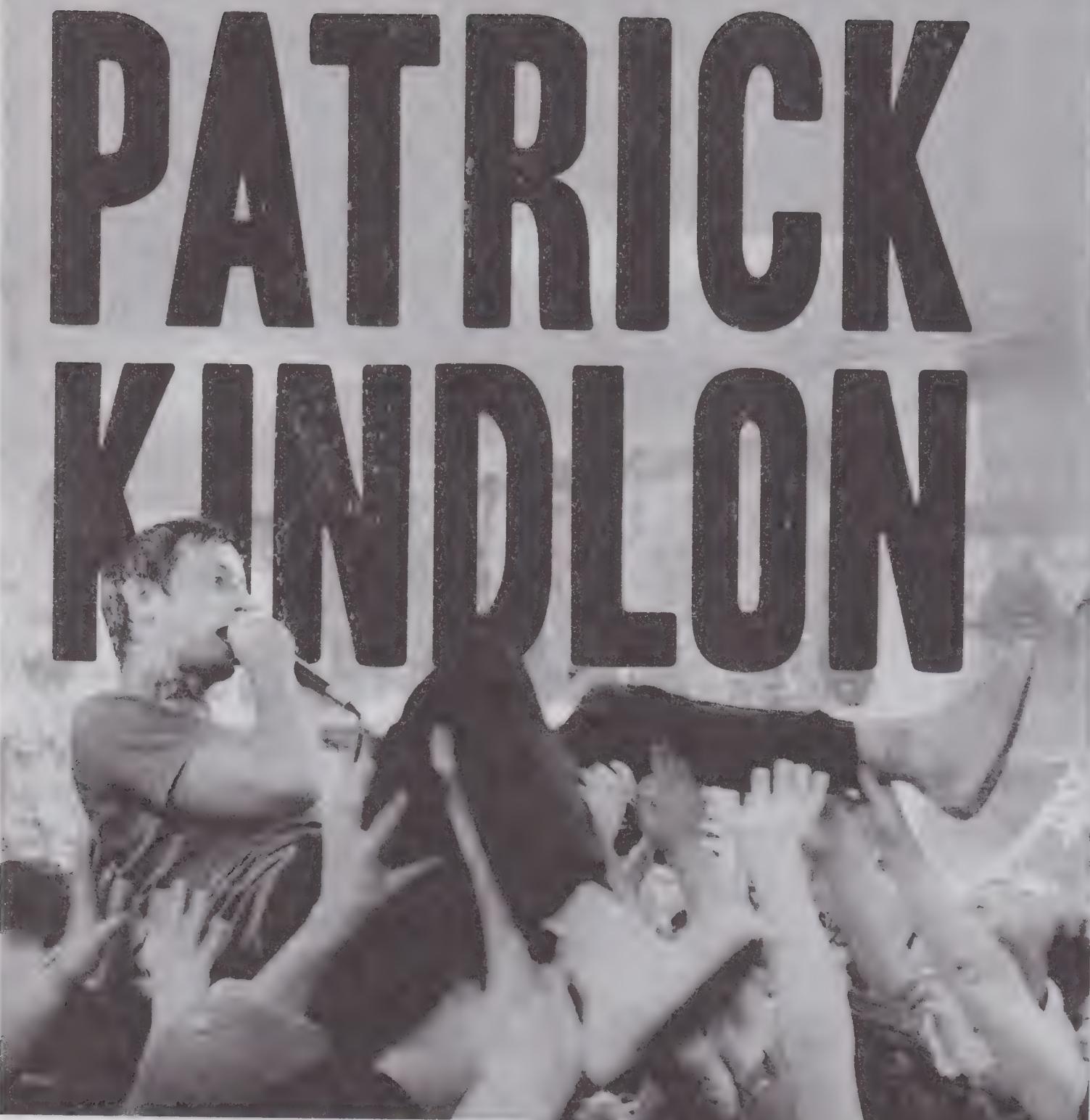
Where did this come from?

Conley: South Africa has a very small music scene mostly dominated by country and gospel music punted by Sony and BMG, so the alternative scene was forced to establish itself by means of DIY. This sprouted into zines, independent labels, and a lot of groundwork. This is being intertwined with skateboarding, surfing and so on.

Shaun: While I do think we do DIY out of principle, it's also the reality of the alternative music scene in South Africa.



PATRICK KANDILON



INTERVIEW // KURT MORRIS

PHOTOS // KAT NIJMEDI & ROBBIE CLARK

LAYOUT // DYLAN DAVIS

MY COLLEGE ROOMMATE TEXTED ME A FEW MONTHS BACK, "YOU SHOULD CHECK OUT DRUG CHURCH." EVEN THOUGH I WAS THE ONE THAT INTRODUCED HIM TO HARDCORE AND PUNK WHEN WE WERE EIGHTEEN, HE'S STAYED ON TOP OF MUSIC MORE THAN I HAVE SINCE THEN. HIS RECOMMENDATIONS CAN BE HIT AND MISS, BUT THE BAND NAME INTRIGUED ME AND I WAS BLOWN AWAY. THEIR MIX OF PIXIES RIFFS COMBINED WITH JAWBREAKER HOOKS, QUICKSAND POST-HARDCORE, AND LEAD SINGER PATRICK KINDLON'S SCREAMING VOCALS AND SARDONIC LYRICS MADE THEIR ALBUM CHEER AN INSTANT FAVORITE WITH ME. I FOUND EVEN MORE GOODNESS DELVING INTO THEIR BACK CATALOG.

DRUG CHURCH HAS BEEN AROUND SINCE THE EARLY 2010S AND ORIGINALLY HAILS FROM UPSTATE NEW YORK, ALTHOUGH THEY LIVE IN VARIOUS PLACES AROUND THE U.S. NOW. IN ADDITION TO DRUG CHURCH, PATRICK KINDLON IS ALSO THE VOCALIST FOR SELF DEFENSE FAMILY (PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS END OF A YEAR) AND WRITES STORIES FOR COMIC BOOKS.

I REACHED OUT TO PATRICK HOPING TO GET AN INTERVIEW AND HE WASN'T VERY RESPONSIVE. WHEN HE FINALLY GOT BACK TO ME I CAME TO FIND OUT THE REASON: HE HAD COVID-19 AND WAS LAID OUT FOR A WHILE. WHEN I FINALLY CAUGHT UP TO HIM IT WAS BY PHONE WHILE HE WAS QUARANTINED IN AN APARTMENT IN DOWNTOWN L.A.

Kurt: Of all the televangelists, why put Kenneth Copeland on a shirt?

Patrick: He's got a face like a deformed Muppet. It's captivating. It's an arresting image. If you put a normal man's face on a T-shirt, who gives a shit? If you put that Frankenstein-looking dude on there, people pause and say, "Oh, what's this about?"

Kurt: Did you come across Kenneth Copeland on TV one day or had you known about him for a while?

Patrick: For reasons that are totally mysterious both to me and the larger world, I have a degree in Religious Studies. I'm aware of most of these fellas in some capacity, although new ones are emerging all the time and I can't keep up. Our guitarist and Ian from Regional Justice Center, who's a music video director, did a music video for our second single off of *Cheer* and it pulled a lot of that televangelist imagery, so it poured over to a shirt seamlessly. You don't get too many faces like Kenneth Copeland's in the world, so you want to take advantage of it while you can.

Kurt: Did you study televangelists in college?

Patrick: Yeah. My interest was the American evangelical movement, which I still find pretty interesting.

Kurt: No way!

Patrick: Yeah. It's been many years ago now, though. I'm sure there's been some pioneering developments in the world of religious scammy.

Kurt: I wrote my masters thesis in American Studies on 1970s Christian evangelical scare films.

Patrick: Oh really?

Kurt: Yeah.

Patrick: That's cool.

Kurt: I'm there with you. I was raised evangelical, but I'm very secular now. That's funny. It's a fascinating world. I'm very glad to be clear of it, but I still find it very interesting to study.

Patrick: I grew up in the only type of religion that benefits people, which is a type of fraternal order masquerading as religion, which is American Catholicism. Which is very casual—highly casual. Basically, it's just Alcoholics Anonymous, but you can drink. Really, it's just about community and the religious stuff, at this point, is largely unknown to the people in the flock. They don't really care about the details. It's just about spending time with other people. I grew up lapsed or distant Catholic. But evangelicalism is interesting to me because of how much it asks of its adherents. For example, it's completely unknowable to me to feel guilt or shame over my thoughts or even behavior. But people who are raised evangelical, that's typical.

Kurt: Oh yeah.

Patrick: For example, my father is an old-fashioned, almost eighty-year-old man. At this point, he's too old to care if I was gay. He's too old and tired. At one point, it probably would've chafed him a little. If I had come out to him, I would've done it dancing. Because there's no internal conflict over that type of thing for me. I didn't grow up in a religious environment that condemned it. There's no second-guessing yourself where I'm from.

Whereas if you're formerly evangelical and not living a secular lifestyle or some hybrid where you incorporate the religious beliefs—but don't like the more conservative value—then most people report they have these moments where they feel deeply

conflicted or insecure in their decisions. They have this constant worry of hell in the back of their head. That's very interesting to me. For most Catholics, post-Vatican II, hell is one hundred percent an abstract. The most you'll get from a Western priest in 2020 is the notion that hell is distance from god. But nobody is trying to sell you on the idea that you're going to be tortured in flames for eternity in Catholicism. But evangelicals, many of them teach their children from birth that hell is real.

Kurt: Yeah. I definitely grew up with that.

Patrick: That, to me, seems so ridiculous, because it obviously is. But if you grow up with that being the norm, I understand how that could be very difficult to shake. I find that whole world very interesting because of how unrelated it is to me.

Kurt: It's a very bizarre way of growing up. Was the fascination with evangelicalism the reason you chose a religion major?

Patrick: I convinced myself I wanted to go back to college and I got accepted to a good one, so I said, "Damn, I guess I gotta go."

Kurt: You went to Bard, right?

Patrick: I did. Then I started going for a creative writing course of study. I found the students—the world was a little different then, except for Bard. At that time, it was 2017 hysterical. You know how in 2016 and 2017 people were really intense about what media they could consume or what art they could create? That was Bard back then.

Kurt: Gotcha.

Patrick: I didn't find it to be a particularly creative place at that time. I would get these peer reviews to my work that were like, "The story was good, but I did not like the use of the language." And I'd say, "It takes place in 1856. How do you expect this character



KAT NIJEMEDDIN

to speak?" It was that type of thing. The only type of literature those people could have gone on to create is YA (Young Adult) literature where it's all about ideology or selling you some stringent behavioral norms. That wasn't what interested me in writing. I was taking one religious studies course as an elective and I thought it was fun. I went to the head and said, "Hey, can I change to a religious studies major, but do my final project and a number of other projects as a creative writing exercise?" And they said, "This is Bard! Who gives a shit about anything?"

Kurt: [laughs] It's the story of the liberal arts. **Patrick:** Yeah. It was actually very fun and very interesting. Although I found most of it to be pretty fucking stupid at large. At least the subject matter was always pretty riveting.

Kurt: What was your final project about in regards to writing and evangelical Christianity?

Patrick: It was a hundred-page novella about an astronaut who was hanging out—describing it out loud doesn't sell it well—in the Arctic Circle with a priest. It's probably as bad as that would lead you to believe, though I haven't revisited it in a decade, so I couldn't say. But it was a fun exercise.

Kurt: Are you going to create a whole album around that story for Drug Church or Self Defense Family?

Patrick: No, but there is a Self Defense EP called *American Evangelical Movement*.

Kurt: Oh, sweet.

Patrick: Hopefully that'll come out this year or early next year. But we'll see.

Kurt: Is it a themed album about evangelicals? Or is that just the title?

Patrick: It's themed in the respect that I don't understand people who willfully repress themselves or—I see more secular analogues to evangelicalism in the last five years than any other time in my life. There are people with really heady theories about this—that while a lot of religious life erodes, we're filling that space with other dogmas. I don't know if that's true or not, but it does stand to reason. But obviously there's no way to test that. The EP is in some respect about that. I believe there's a secular puritanism at the moment that makes my fucking stomach turn. That's what it's really about. Just that Americans, at our core, are puritans who refuse to admit it.

Kurt: Yeah. We were founded by Puritans, so why not? They're some of my favorite people in history because they're so bizarre in a lot of ways. Like, they didn't celebrate Christmas! What?

Patrick: Why would you?

Kurt: It's a secular holiday.

Patrick: Co-opted by that devilish pope.

Kurt: Yes, exactly! It's funny because I came to you through Drug Church and then I heard you had another band. And with a name like Self Defense Family I thought, "This is going to be one of those hardcore crews. It's going to be a supergroup hardcore crew like Path Of Resistance." I don't know if you remember that group.

Patrick: I love Path Of Resistance! Come on!

Kurt: And then I heard it and I thought, "All right. This is not Path Of Resistance. This is not hardcore." If someone came to you through the hardcore scene, how would you describe Self Defense Family to them?

Patrick: I'd probably describe it the same way I describe it to old ladies I sit next to on the plane that ask me about it. I would say it's punk music played too slowly or rock music that's made punk by the fact that it has entirely atonal vocals. It's slow, repetitive, often based on 1.5 riffs per song. It's not complicated music, but it's also not four-chord rock music. It doesn't have too many analogues. Obviously we borrow a lot from Lungfish. The last few records you could probably hear anything from Nick Cave to Tom Petty as well. It's either inept rock or the most genius punk. I don't know which.

Kurt: And what do the old ladies on the plane say when you explain it to them like that?

Patrick: They say, "So, like Bob Seger?" and I say, "Exactly like Bob Seger."

Kurt: "Night Moves" is a good song.

Patrick: Yeah, Bob Seger's got some hits.

Kurt: I just wondered if you namedropped Lungfish if she understood who that was.

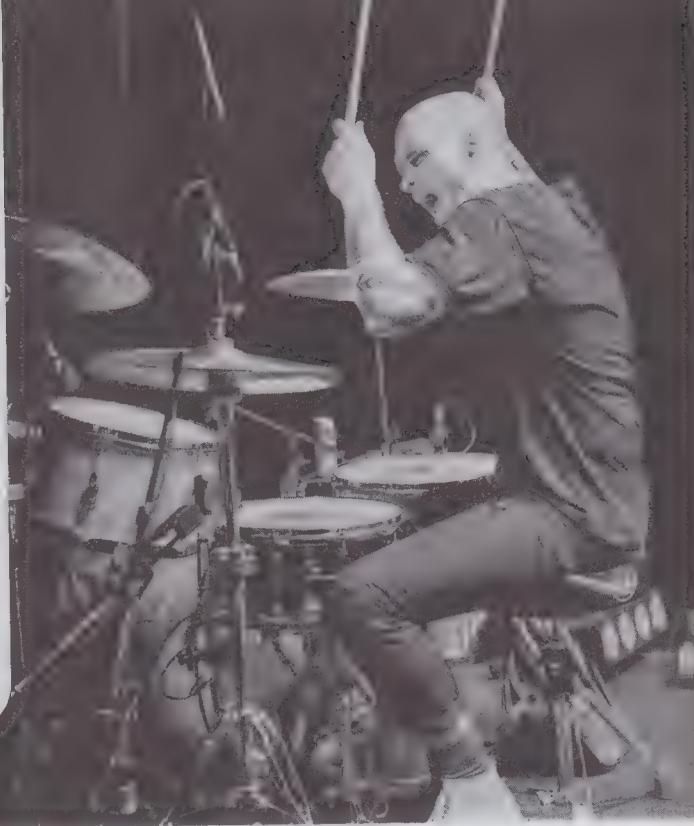
Patrick: As the Grand Salamander of the Lungfish fan club, I brought a lot of people into the Lungfish world, but it's taken time. The little old lady may or may not go look that up on Spotify.

Kurt: When you say an old lady, I'm picturing some eighty-five-year-old woman with a walker and her hair up in rollers, but she's probably more like fifty, wasn't she?

Patrick: Yeah. If she's eighty, I tell her I'm a rapper so she stops talking to me.

Kurt: [laughs] So I've been writing for zines and websites for about twenty or twenty-five years, and until recently, I didn't realize that Self Defense Family had their roots in End Of A Year. And I remember End Of A Year when you guys

AMERICAN CATHOLICISM...
BASICALLY, IT'S JUST
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS,
BUT YOU CAN DRINK....
IT'S JUST ABOUT
SPENDING TIME WITH
OTHER PEOPLE.



were on Revelation Records. So how did you make that transition from End Of A Year to Self Defense Family? Does it have any of the same people from when you started in the early 2000s?

Patrick: Yeah. Andrew and I have been playing together for many years. But there are a lot of changes. The reason we went with Self Defense Family is because it feels more like an amorphous thing than the traditional band. So, there are only two elements to an ax: the handle and the blade. The blade is gonna go first so you'll replace the blade. And then years later you'll have to replace the handle. And then can it be said it's the same ax or not?

Kurt: Oh, yeah. I see what you're saying.

Patrick: That's what I find about so many traditional "rock acts." They're trying to be the same act despite the fact that they've changed handles multiple times. I didn't want to do that. With Self Defense Family, not a single member has played every show.

Kurt: Not even you?

Patrick: Not even me. That's by design. There's no member that's played on every release. I'm often seen as the head of it, but it's only because I'm the guy who gives interviews. It's people who enjoy playing together all in a big group chat, and if we get an offer of some type, we put together who's able to play on it or who wants to play on it and then we go do that.

Kurt: So how come you didn't call it a collective?

Patrick: Because that word reminds me too much of zine libraries and fucking rules about no moshing. [laughs] So I avoid that language.

Kurt: It's more of a family in the sense that you're all there together. But I'm bummed because End Of A Year is a great band name, with the Embrace reference there.

Patrick: What's interesting is that I wanted to change it. I hated that name. I was grateful when we got to sound like a bad hardcore crew. With Self Defense Family some people really hate the name, but to me it's a perfect manifestation of what I'm trying to put out in the world. We play indie music, but there's at least three of us who will fuck you up. So that's kind of where I'm at.

At different times in my life, you've got different goals and sometimes you might want to be a bigger band up to that point, and you wonder what the compromises you're going to have to make are. The one thing I've never been able to compromise on is that we play soft music, but I don't want any association with the affectations of weakness. I think that indie or emo for many years are selling this kind of dangerous delicateness that's the opposite of what I want for my own life. There's this meme going around at this time of these dudes pretending to be into whatever band—the meme is that they fill in a different band name every time. And they're doing it to spend time with depressed girls.

That's the meme, but that meme speaks to a larger reality I've seen over the years, which is so much of genre music such as indie or college rock—well college rock makes me sound 150 years old—or emo music or post-hardcore has this performative emotion to it that I think is gross. Much like hardcore often has a performative anger to it. Performative anger might be offensive to some peoples' sensibilities, but the performative wounded

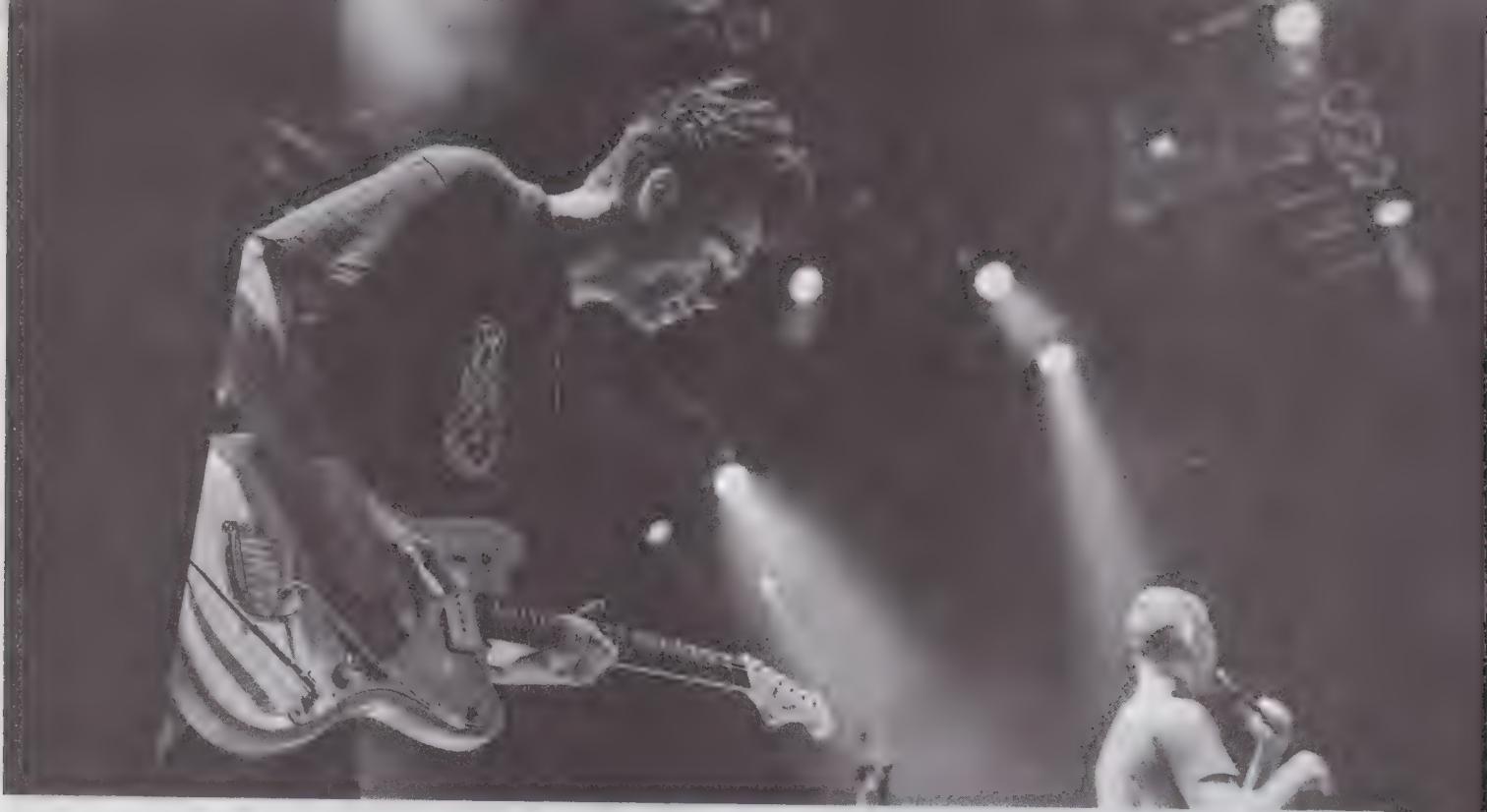
man—nothing is grosser. The person who's putting on the air that they have a deeper well of emotion than they do, as a person who's watching music, is really unattractive and I've never wanted to play with those bands very much. The name Self Defense Family and our presentation is kind of a response to that. If I just play shirtless, can I push away all the people who need me to be soft to fulfill their idea of what that type of band should be?

Kurt: You're trying to take the traditional stereotype and flip it around. Well, not just that, but saying, "That's not who we are. That's not what we're going to do."

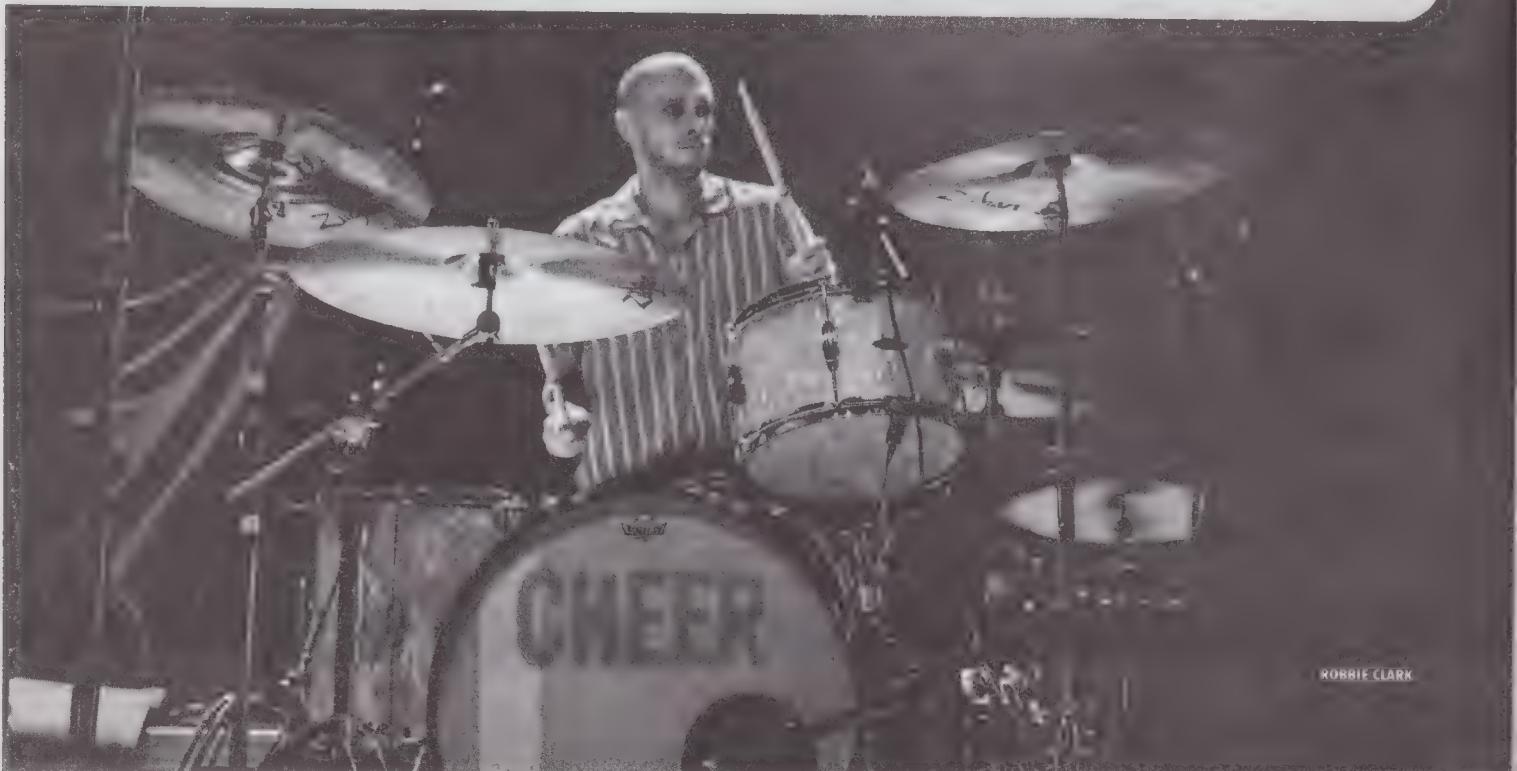
Patrick: Right. It's not about subverting expectations for the sake of it. It's about my personal boundaries. I'm not a tough guy at all, but I don't connect with sadness as a marketing tool. I find it very off-putting and if I can avoid it in what I do, that'll make what I do that much more honest to myself.

Kurt: So, when you're writing, do you consciously sit down and say, "Now I'm writing a Drug Church song" or "I'm sitting down now to write a Self Defense Family song"? Or do you say, "I just thought of this lyric and it would work better for Drug Church"?

Patrick: I don't write like that at all. I go into the studio and I listen to the song for half an hour and then I write the lyrics. This (next) album might be a little different because I'm away from the studio—I'm trapped in quarantine—but in general the process for both bands is the same. I go into the studio either while the band is recording or immediately after. I play the song on headphones for half an hour to an hour. I take



I WORKED AT A VIDEO GAME STORE THAT WAS A DRUG FRONT, WHERE THEY TOLD ME, "IF SOMEBODY STICKS A GUN IN YOUR FACE, JUST GIVE THEM THE MONEY. IT'S FINE."



ROBBIE CLARK

notes. Typically, I'll find one line while I'm listening and then after that I just sit there for another twenty minutes and I write the song.

Kurt: Wow.

Patrick: I've found that works best for me, because I need to have the anxiety of wasting somebody else's money to get anything done.

Kurt: You're putting yourself in a financial vise.

Patrick: That's how ninety-nine percent of Self Defense Family records have been written and all the Drug Church records have been written.

Kurt: Has there ever been any connection between song writing and comic writing?

Patrick: There's a project out there that hasn't seen print yet and there's a Self Defense EP written as a soundtrack to a graphic novel. Both are quite good.

Kurt: Both suck! They're horrible!

Patrick: Yeah, I'm a good sales person. But I used to want to keep them very separate because very few people in life are gifted two careers. Well, no, let me amend that. They say most people have nine careers, but very few public-facing people get multiple careers. For example, if you're a musician, nobody wants to read your fucking book unless it's about music. And if you're a writer, not a living soul wants to hear your fucking songs. I went to great lengths to keep these two things separate.

Then I realized I'm so small potatoes that I don't have to worry about the Henry Rollins-ness of this. I sell a few thousand records. Ain't nobody gives a shit about me. I'm okay with combining them now. I also see that the world is changing. You are allowed to do more things now than you have in the past. It used to be you were stuck. If you did one thing, you were only ever seen to be good at one thing. Now that's gone away a little bit.

Kurt: Everybody's got a side hustle. Sometimes that means that they're both in the arts, perhaps.

Patrick: Yeah. I was a person who some people knew through Self Defense Family for many years and then when Drug Church came around, it's difficult to have two things that anybody cares about. I've been blessed that both bands have their audiences. Right now I feel like a very blessed person that I'm able to do all the things I want to do without people sitting around going, "Which one is his *real* thing?"

Kurt: You're like, "I'm a barista. That's my real thing, people!"

Patrick: What I want to say is that poverty is my real thing. But so far, so good. I'm blessed. But at some point if I become wildly successful at one thing, I'm sure people will default to seeing everything else as some diversion instead for what it is, which is all different, fulfilling parts of a life that I feel blessed to have.

Kurt: So, you don't have a nine-to-five or part-time gig?

Patrick: I have as many jobs as I can hold at any given time. I make a little bit of money

off my podcasts (Axe to Grind and Worst Possible Timeline). I make a little bit of money off comic books, and I make a little bit of money off of music. Between those things I will do literally whatever else is on the table. Right now, I'm applying for video game jobs and if I get those I'll work those as a contract worker.

Kurt: Oh, sweet. You'd write stories for them?

Patrick: Yeah. There's no career in the world that respects comic books except video games.

Kurt: Maybe some movies, too.

Patrick: Well, maybe animation. Hollywood is willing to buy my story, but they're not willing to buy me writing new ones.

Kurt: Oh, no. Of course. I totally agree.

Patrick: Although, that's another thing. I've got an animation pitch; I've got a few screenplays laying around. I'd be happy to sell any one of those. But I'll also paint houses. As long as I get to do the things that are fulfilling for me, I'll also do whatever else puts food on the table. Although a traditional nine-to-five is probably not in the cards anytime soon. The notion of reporting someplace makes me feel like a prisoner of some type. Any readers who find themselves in that circumstance, it may sound like the most pretentious dogshit of all time. But, for myself, I never understood the army, because it felt like you were signing up to allow other adults to yell at you as though you weren't an adult. And that's how I feel about some office jobs.

Kurt: It's interesting we're talking about work, though, because "Weed Pin" is my favorite song on *Cheer* and it struck a chord with me, because I've had some shitty jobs. Was that based on a personal experience or is it more a fictional story?

Patrick: [laughs] It's mostly fictional, but it's told from the time I worked as a custodial engineer in a mental health facility. A janitor at a nuthouse, in layman's speak.

Kurt: [laughs] Yeah, that's the PC way of saying it.

Patrick: I wasn't qualified.

Kurt: How can you not be qualified as a janitor?

Patrick: The thing that people take for granted—just as you did and I did before I went into that—is that things that look easy—there's somebody who has made that their career and they're actually good at it. I was working alongside twenty-year janitors. Now, being a janitor looks like some shit anybody can do and, in truth, that's probably the reality. Anybody can do it. But the ability to do it versus the ability to do it at the highest level of efficiency are worlds apart. Anybody on earth can learn to play bass in a weekend. They're not gonna be the guy from Rancid.

Kurt: Who wants to be the guy from Rancid?

Patrick: Well, he rips!

Kurt: Eh, Mike Watt?

Patrick: Okay, Mike Watt. You're not gonna be Mike Watt. What I learned is that you can be bad at being a janitor, because I was. In that respect it's a true story, but I didn't work

at a lab dealing with bacteria or anything else, thankfully.

Kurt: Was the janitor job the worst job you've ever had?

Patrick: No. I worked at a video game store that was a drug front, where they told me, "If somebody sticks a gun in your face, just give them the money. It's fine. We never try and keep more than eighty bucks in the register." That one was bad.

Kurt: Did you ever get robbed?

Patrick: No, no, no. I didn't work there long enough, because I fell for a local crackhead scam and they determined I wasn't qualified to be working in that environment.

Kurt: Wait, what does that mean?

Patrick: That means when the semi-homeless guy or halfway house guy with a drug problem comes up to you and tells you about whatever just fell off the back of a truck and whatever, I used cash register money to buy a fraudulent iPod and was released from that position. I wasn't really qualified for that position. I'm trying to think of other terrible jobs. I did the flooring of a megachurch. That was a bad job because I was dealing with the most grizzled contractors you can imagine. I need to point out that this was a different time, so attitudes about sexuality were a little different. I don't present like a grizzled contractor.

Kurt: No, you do not.

Patrick: This led to some confusion. [laughs] They didn't quite know what to make of me. So that was an uncomfortable job. But I do like manual labor. I worked on farms and I thought that was fun.

Kurt: Another song on *Cheer* I really like is "Unlicensed Guidance Counselor." We were talking about evangelicalism and the idea of feeling shame—since it's mentioned in that song—and then having that be a springboard to change your life. Have you had those experiences? Or were you speaking in that song of some other fictional type idea? Because I could relate to that reaching rock bottom point and you get shameful enough about your behavior that you feel you need to change them.

Patrick: I'm sure that applies to me in the way that it applies to everybody, but to me it was about responding to the moment without sounding too didactic. At the time that record was recorded we were in this weird place. It felt like peoples' hobby—where if you were underemployed or unhappy in some larger way—your hobby became judging other people. That song, in whatever small way, reminds people this shame you want to project on other people and make sure they experience is doubtlessly coming back around. And for many of you, it'll probably manifest in feeling bad about how you spent the last couple years online attacking strangers looking like a fucking weirdo. To a degree, that's what it's about. I legitimately think everybody hits that point where if you live long enough—and I also found this in art. It can be a very frustrating few years. Do you ever read *Watchmen*?

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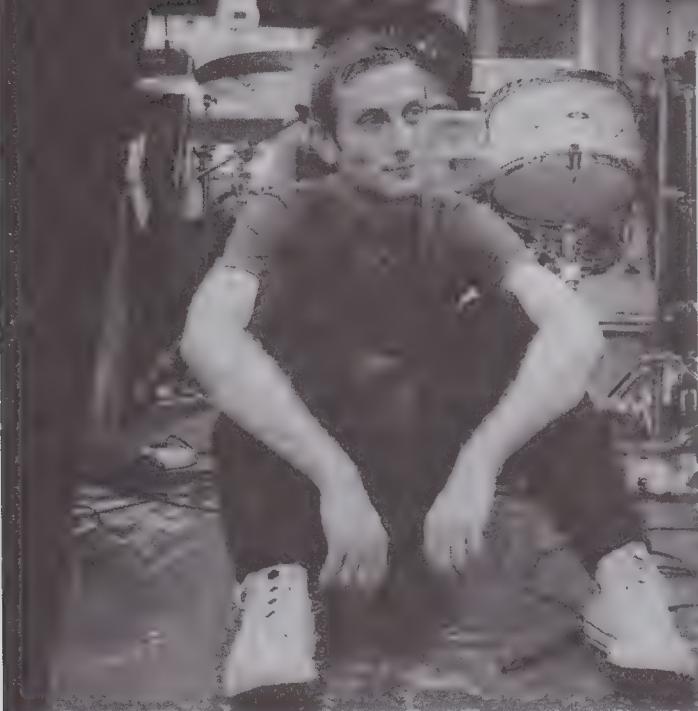
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Kurt: Yes. I should say I'm familiar with it. I'm not an expert in it.

Patrick: In that, there's a part that's not talked about very often. It's not necessarily the biggest part of the story. There's an older woman who views a terrible event that happened to her many years later as just a thing that happened. And a horrible thing, a thing she wouldn't want to do again, but ultimately just another thing in this life. That resonates with me so much. Because that's a thing you can't know before you're thirty. Before that age everything is a trauma or a slight or a wound received or you've done to another person.

It really takes some age to understand, "Oh, I'm going to be wounded dozens if not hundreds of times in my life. This isn't the way I thought it was." It goes the same way with wounding people. Obviously, I don't think you should be out there trying. It goes the same way with breaking peoples' hearts or not being honest with people. Or whatever it is that fucking people do to each other. Or stealing from their fucking grandma. Whatever it is. You're going to experience this a lot. And eventually, god willing, you're going to get tired of whatever it is you're doing.

Also, I've got a lot of drug addicts in the family and it's the same story. Yeah, some people hit rock bottom. Just as many people get tired. And once in a while, you've got somebody who doesn't have the good sense to do either. It's one of those things where the last couple of years a good thing happened, which was that young people got the lion's share of visibility, because young people are first adopters of social media. They're the ones who are the loudest voices for some time now. And young people experience things with such a magnification and such

an intensity that we started to normalize a level of trauma that we think is going to stay forever. And, really, what's more likely to happen is we're going to grow older and some of us will get better and treat people better and get treated better. And other people won't.

Kurt: And a lot of people will get past it.

Patrick: Yeah. They'll hit their breaking point. They'll hit their nexus or event horizon on all the shitty things in the past. It applies to me as much as it applies to anybody. But it wasn't necessarily written as a first-person sort of thing. Yeah.

Kurt: What did you say to some guy in New Haven, Conn., that made him want to throw urine on you?

Patrick: Eh, I don't know if I said anything. I ended up dating his ex-girlfriend. Before she and I knew each other, I commented that he looked like a goblin and she was way out of his league, which is true. He shouldn't have been offended, because it was a compliment. But because I ended up dating her later, obviously he would feel a way about that. I hope that's water under the bridge. Because if you're a goblin that can do great with your chosen preferences, with the type of person you want to be having sex with, good on you. Nobody's mad at that. If anything, show some deference to that amazing charm you must have. But I think he was a young guy and young guys get offended at being called ugly. He's probably thirty now and realizes being ugly is just what it is and who gives a shit?

Kurt: He's passed that magical threshold. And he realized it's that thing where he reached rock bottom when he threatened to throw urine on you at a show in New Haven, Conn., and now he's turned things around.

GETTING GREY HAIR AT A YOUNG AGE WAS THE BEST THING FOR ME. PEOPLE STARTED DEFERRING TO ME.

Patrick: How melodramatic are kids? Throwing urine. It's like something chimpanzees would do.

Kurt: Or like a GG Allin show.

Patrick: Yeah, but that would've been way cooler.

Kurt: You weren't wearing a leather diaper at the time, were you? You weren't inviting to have this done to you?

Patrick: No, I was. I came prepared.

Kurt: You had a shitty mustache and shaved your head.

Patrick: I made sure I fully embraced my micro-penis before getting on stage.

Kurt: Have you ever had anything thrown at you on stage?

Patrick: I had a full bottle of Pepsi bounce off my nose, but it was a plastic one. People rush the stage and all that nonsense, but I think once I got grey hair people backed off of that.

Kurt: It was like, "Don't hit grandpa!"

Patrick: Yeah, exactly. Getting grey hair at a young age was the best thing for me. People started deferring to me. My father's incarcerated. He's been incarcerated twice and both times were later in life. As a result, he's never had to deal with some of the stuff that I would have to deal with if I went to prison today. People come up to him and say, "Hey, Big Frank, why don't you get out of here. It's gonna get a little too serious." Then my dad knows it's time to go. But that's how people are with me now. "Hey, old grey hair. Why don't you get the fuck out of here? It's going to be a little serious." And I'm like, "Oh, all right. I'm gonna get the fuck out of here." Getting grey hair has been a blessing. If I could make any wish for the world, it would be that you all get grey hair at thirty.



Author and self-described *chingona* Myriam Gurba is kicking 2020's ass.

It started in January, when her takedown of the novel *American Dirt* went viral. Gurba's review is scathing, thoughtful, and funny—a sweet spot that her prose often hits. In *Tropics of Meta*, Gurba said that the Oprah's Book Club Pick "...tastes like its title," sharing how the author, who has no Mexican ancestry, "...plops overly-ripe Mexican stereotypes ... into her wannabe realist prose."

Gurba's review kicked off a long-overdue conversation about representation in the publishing industry. Why aren't more underrepresented people allowed to tell their own stories, and do a much better job in the process?

The conversation around *American Dirt* also led to the formation of Dignidad Literaria, a grassroots movement that is fighting for better Latinx representation on bookshelves and in the overwhelmingly white publishing industry. Along with leading the conversation on social media, Gurba and her Dignidad Literaria co-founders David Bowles and Roberto Lovato met with publishing execs in New York to make their demands in person.

So, if you beef with Oprah in January, what do you do in February? Well, Gurba—a high school teacher—was placed on administrative leave by the Long Beach Unified School District for, as she Tweeted, "being 'disruptive.'" That disruption? Speaking out online and helping students organize to fight back against a fellow teacher with a reputation for using violence and hate speech against students. The teacher in question is now on leave as well.

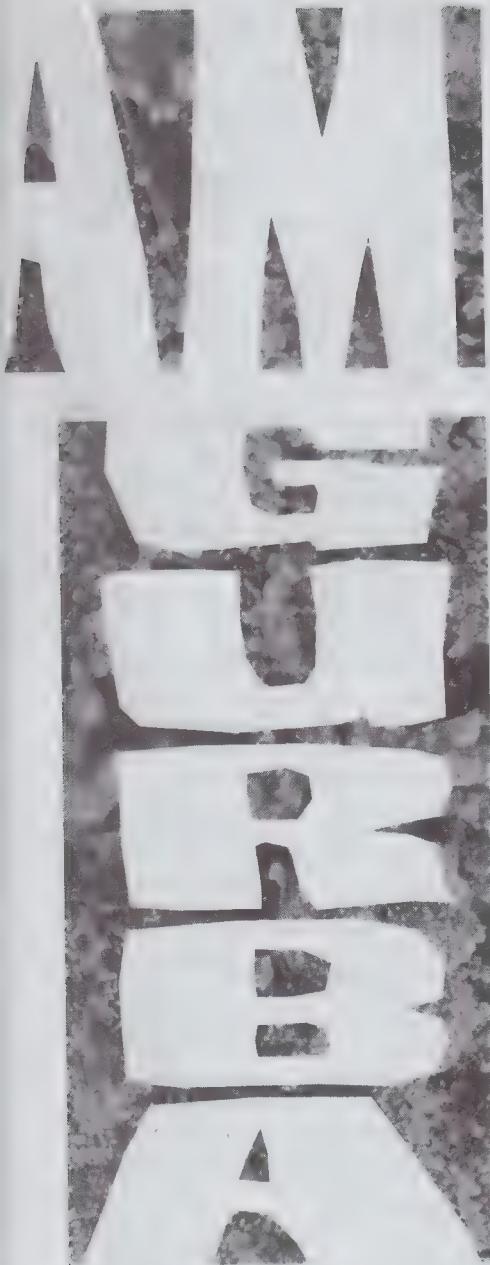
In addition to her accomplishments as an activist and educator, Gurba is a visual artist, co-host with MariNaomi of the AskBiGrlz podcast, a veteran of the Sister Spit spoken word and performance art tour, and the author of three books.

Gurba's most recent book, the 2017 memoir *Mean*, is written with an energy that bursts off the page, using a brash sense of humor to trace Gurba's coming-of-age as a queer Chicana artist. The humor and wordplay in *Mean* make her trenchant insights on sexual violence, racism, misogyny, and suffocating small-town life hit that much harder. The book is entertaining, thought-provoking, and a surefire conversation starter. Or, as Cheryl Strayed said in the *New York Times*, "Like most truly great books, *Mean* made me laugh, cry and think. Myriam Gurba's a scorchingly good writer."

In true pandemic style, Gurba and I did this interview via video chat on May 15, 2020, Myriam in a Highland Park garage, me in my View Park dining room. We discussed humor, speaking out, meanness, and much more.



GEOFF CORDNER



came to be included in *Mean*, I approached those fragments as narrative experiments in presenting sexual trauma and writing about sexual trauma and writing through sexual trauma. That invited me to be much more spontaneous. And also, in a way, that invited playfulness. You need spontaneity in order to be able to play.

I think that a person's ability to engage in that sort of spontaneity and a person's ability to play indicates that they are healing from trauma. If you encounter a narrative that's lacking in those elements, that narration feels kind of stunted. They seem to be the prevailing style that was emerging about ten years ago. As an example, I'll give the work of Alice Sebold. I'd encountered her memoir *Lucky* and her novel *The Lovely Bones*, and I wanted to write about my experience of sexual assault very differently.

I think a lot of funny people come from funny parents, right? My mom is funny. My dad is funny. And I think that both of them have developed their senses of humor largely in response to trauma and tragedy, right? Humor becomes a way to weather a storm. For victims of sexual assault, comedy and humor can be ways to, again, weather that storm. I also think they become a way to recuperate parts of yourself that have been fucked with.

The other thing that I think is really valuable about humor and comedy is the perspective that it gives a survivor. When you laugh with somebody, you're laughing with a peer, right, you're seeing eye to eye. When you laugh *at*, you position yourself *above*. So you're taking the higher ground and you're claiming authority and you're claiming superiority. And I positioned myself that way as a narrator in *Mean*. So, for me, it's healing to be able to laugh at somebody who harmed me, because it positions me above them. I wanted to offer other survivors a way of pivoting and repositioning themselves, not just in relationship to the event, but in relationship to perpetrators as well.

Chris: How do people react?

Myriam: The reactions have been varied. A lot of readers, especially survivors, have commented to me that it hadn't occurred to them that they could articulate and narrate a chronicle of their trauma in this way. Some people have taken issue with the introduction of comedy or humor into a story like mine, because they suggest that the humor doesn't have a place in a story that involves sexual violence. To me, that seems stifling. To dictate to a survivor that she can't access that is another way of delegitimizing the survivor's experience.

The storytelling habits that I saw forming were troublesome, because it seemed that survivors were required to tell their story with almost a religious quality, this tone of reverence. And it's like, reverence for what? Why should I revere one of the worst

moments of my life? When I was degraded? I'm not gonna approach that with reverence. It was fucking sick. So why should I take a religious approach to it? I should be able to mock the person that did this to me. Because ultimately what they were doing was mocking my ability to exist.

So I've been critiqued for having done that, but I understood that I was going to provoke that critique.

Chris: Sure. I'm a big fan of laughing to keep from crying.

Myriam: Right.

Chris: How does this humor tie into the theory of meanness that you discuss in *Mean*?

Myriam: I enjoy challenging humor. Humor that pushes right up against that boundary. And sometimes it transgresses. Sometimes it's a little too painful. Sometimes it becomes too violent. Sometimes I punch inappropriately. But I like to give myself the ability to experiment and to make those mistakes, and I do issue apologies when I transgress and go too far.

One of the elements of *Mean* as a project was to present myself as a character who wasn't necessarily the most sympathetic narrator. So I narrate myself into existence and discuss who I am, and I'm sort of no-holds-barred about how biting my personality can be and how cruel my humor can be.

At the same time, I'm inviting readers to continue to experience empathy for me in spite of my not being who they might consider to be the easiest person to empathize with. That's part of the project of the book: I shouldn't have to be perfect, and I shouldn't have to be humble, and I shouldn't have to grovel for you to feel something for me if I'm assaulted. Your allyship and empathy shouldn't be contingent on me being a good woman.

Some readers walk right into the trap and they have said, "I can't. I had to put the book down because I didn't like her."

And that was sort of the point: can you dislike me and still feel compassion for me? People yoke those two things together. You have to be likeable for me to give you compassion. And to me, that's not real compassion. That's transactional, you know?

Chris: Yeah. That's a great space to be working in. On to another light topic [laughter]. I wanted to talk about *American Dirt*. I haven't read it and don't see any reason to, but by most accounts, it's an ill-conceived and offensive book. And it's a book that people in the publishing industry decided was going to be a hit, and it worked. That's dispiriting!

With that in mind, how do you continue making art knowing that oftentimes, a project's success is preordained?

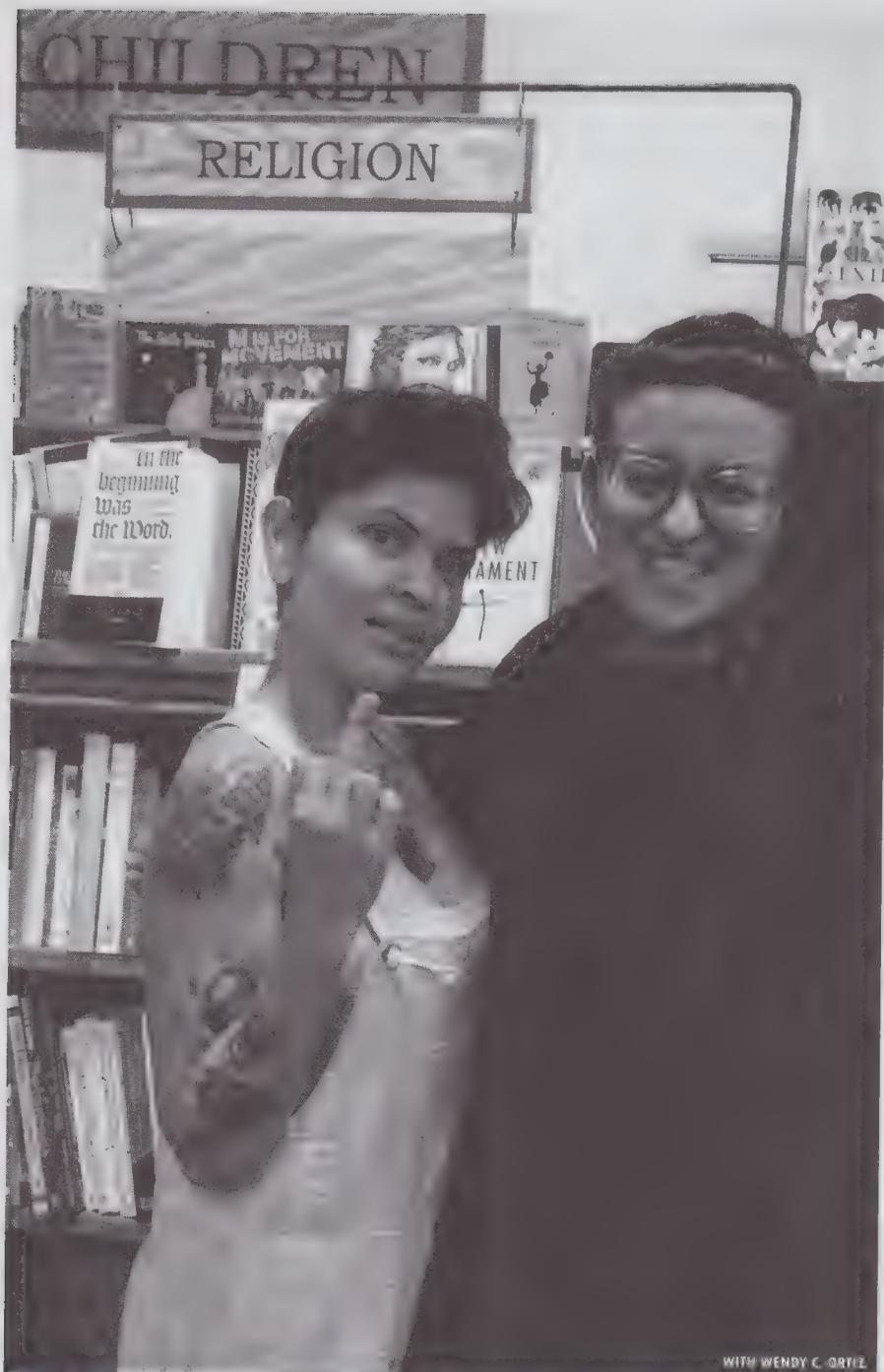
Myriam: I often approach art in this way. I tell myself, I'd like for an audience to exist

INTERVIEW BY CHRIS TERRY
PHOTOS COURTESY OF MYRIAM GURBA
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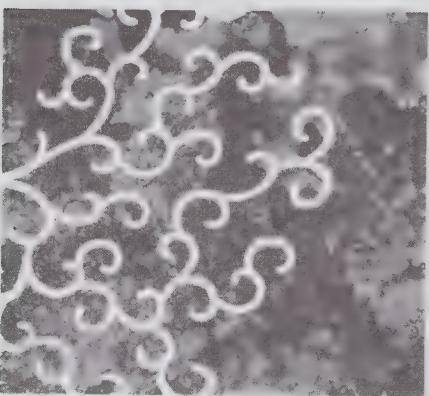
Chris: The first thing I wanted to talk about was your use of humor, which I'm enjoying the hell out of. Your memoir *Mean* is really funny while touching on really serious topics like rape, murder, and racism. Tell me about using humor to convey trauma.

Myriam: The use of humor in *Mean* was intentional and a response to what I found to be the storytelling habits that were developing when it came to narrating sexual trauma in the United States. When I first began writing a few of the fragments that

I WRITE WITH MY EYE, BUT I ALSO WRITE WITH MY EAR.



WITH WENDY C. ORTIZ



READING IN A WINE STORE

for whatever it is I happen to be creating in this moment. But an audience might never come to this work. And that's okay. So that's the mindset with which I create.

The other thing that I'll often tell myself when I embark on a project is that everybody might hate this and I have to be okay with that. I'm not making this for the sake of it being liked; I'm making it because of a compulsion.

I think that artists are compulsive people. We do what we do because we feel that we have to. If we don't, there's a sense of discomfort that we carry. Our way of working through our existence is to make sense of it through art. We think through life's problems through whatever genre or medium we work in. I think that for artists, art is our math. We're constantly working through these equations using a very different set of tools. So whether or not the artist is consumed by any sort of market is not of consequence. That kind of insulates me.

The fact that I'm a queer person, I'm femme, I'm Chicana means that, in all likelihood, my audience is going to be a lot smaller. I'm not positioned like (*American Dirt* author) Janine Cummins, right? I'm not positioned for that kind of success. I don't have those doors automatically open to me. And I've always understood that.

Chris: If I'm feeling stressed about writing, I comfort myself by looking out my window at all the cars at the stoplight and thinking, "These people don't read books. It doesn't matter."

Myriam: Exactly. And then the other thing that comforts me is death. Heidegger, he was Hitler's right hand dude when it came to the philosophy of the Reich, but one thing that I do appreciate very much about Heidegger is that he was once asked during a lecture—I'm paraphrasing—how is it that people can really come into embracing life and understanding life in its most authentic form. He was silent for a couple moments and then he advised the person asking the question to spend more time in graveyards.

That's sort of what I carry with me. I carry this image of a graveyard in my head. And that keeps me going, because I'm gonna wind up there too. And so are you. I remind my students of that constantly, like, let's keep in mind that we're going to die. So, what are we gonna do with this little gift that we've been given?

Chris: With that in mind, what are you working on now?

Myriam: Right now, I'm working on a couple of different projects. I'm writing and publishing articles and essays, and then I'm also working on a sequel to *Mean*. That's probably the most emotionally challenging thing that I've taken on as of late. I'm also working with a classical composer to develop lyrics for choral performance. I've never worked with a musician before, let alone somebody who composes classically, so that's exciting.

Chris: Do you listen to music when you write?



Myriam: I seldom can. If I do listen to music when I write, it can't have lyrics. For me, part of writing is approaching the rhythm of language. If I'm writing and listening to words, I start trying to harmonize what I'm writing with what I'm listening to, and I can't fucking do that. I have to develop this melody as I'm working. I pay a lot of attention to the way that words sound internally. Music can disrupt that.

Chris: I agree. You did the Sister Spit spoken word tour a few years ago. Do you write with reading out loud in mind?

Myriam: I've gone on the Sister Spit tour several times, and that experience has shaped my writing ear. I write with my eye, but I also write with my ear. I always consider how a work might be performed, and I often write with that endgame in mind. If I were to be on a stage, how would I be delivering this? What would it sound like?

One of the things that I'm really invested in is silence. For me, a lot of the drama in a work exists in the various pauses. That's also where a lot of the humor is, in the silence. Especially silences that aren't supposed to be there or a silence that you drag somebody into, because silence is uncomfortable, right? Even silence on the page is uncomfortable, and it tends to elicit a giggle.

Chris: What's going on with the Dignidad Literaria movement?

Myriam: Dignidad Literaria is still alive, although we've had to rethink what strategies we're going to be applying in order to transform the publishing world under pandemic conditions.

We had met with Macmillan Publishers and Flatiron executives several months ago. We attempted to convince them to repair

some of the harm they'd done not just through the publication of *American Dirt*, but also in the marketing, because it was largely the marketing that was damaging and just straight up hateful. So we met with them and they promised that they were going to make changes, but then never articulated in a tangible or measurable way what those changes were going to be.

They've since brought on and hired a new editor, who is Latina, and so that new hire is heartening, but it appears that they're pivoting. They're going to try to use the pandemic as a shield. They're gonna argue, "Well, we can't move forward with any of these initiatives because now we're in survival mode."

But our answer to them is that they might be in survival mode, but consider people of color and the predicament that we've been thrust into. We all know what those numbers are. We all know which communities are being hardest hit by the pandemic. It's brown people. Let's not fucking play. It's not y'all at Macmillan. So that's the standoff that we're at right now with them.

Chris: It's very frustrating to hear that they're using that as an excuse. Between the *American Dirt* controversy and your activism at your job, your year has been full of speaking truth to power. What would you tell someone who's scared of consequences if they speak up against an injustice that they see?

Myriam: I think that there are a lot of folks who have a misperception when it comes to bravery and courage. They think that the folks who are labeled as brave or courageous act in extraordinary ways because they're fearless. That's not the case. People who are engaged

in that kind of extraordinary behavior often do so in spite of fear.

They also assess and calculate the risk, like, what's the potential consequence of my choice to act in this rebellious way? And then you accept that the guillotine might come down. That's part and parcel of direct action. That's something that a person needs to accept. I think that cowardice is rewarded in the United States. I think cowardice is rewarded globally.

When I considered critiquing my school district and critiquing particular administrators, I considered what could potentially happen to me. I felt that the risk was worth taking, because it would send a message to my teenage students. I wanted them to know that there are adults who are willing to make sacrifices on their behalf. Because so seldom are adults willing to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of those who are younger. I wanted to set that example for them so that perhaps they could grow up to become one of those adults.

Chris: You've been posting a lot about Joan Didion, especially her writing about Mexico.

Myriam: I'd been working on an essay about Joan Didion. Joan Didion is a writer who I admire. But I think that idolization of writers and the cult of personality that develops around writers can be really dangerous, because it places them beyond critique. I think that anybody who writes deserves to be scrutinized and I think that those folks who achieve that status deserve it the most.

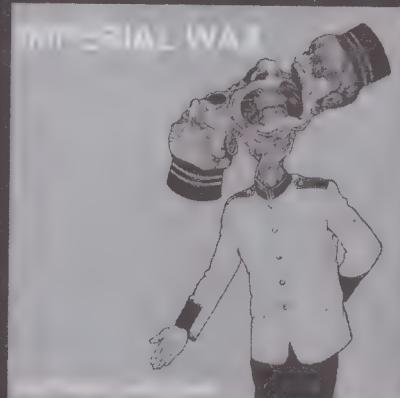
So anybody to whom an entire region of the United States is gifted by the literary establishment really ought to be scrutinized. I wanted to take a scalpel to the racial grammar that's exercised in her work because, for all

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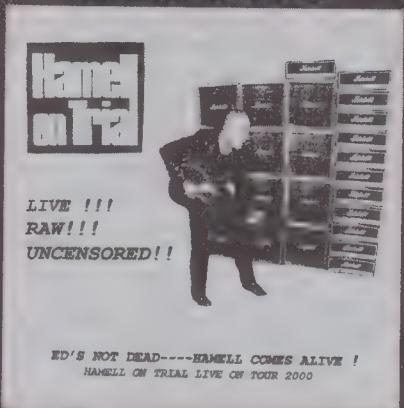
FRONTIER DAN AND THE HICKOIDS
SIX MILES FROM THE SUN...STUDIO
LATHE-CUT 10"/DIGITAL



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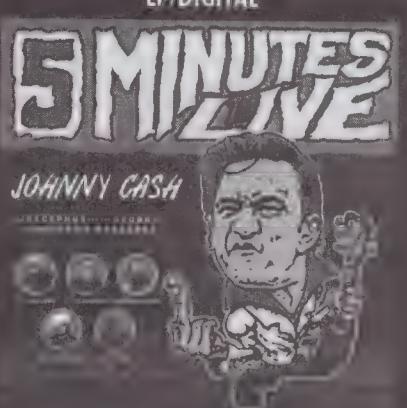
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the critique that she's received, I hadn't seen much happen when it came to those threads. I wanted to tease out those threads and publish it as an invitation to other writers to reassess their beloveds and just sort of take an axe to them.

Chris: That's an important thing to do with art. There's some stuff I'm scared to reread, because it meant a lot to me at one time, and I don't want to screw that up now.

Myriam: But I think that's good. That's how we evolve. And that's why I love critique. But, yeah, there have been people who have been very critical of the essay, all men, and mostly white men, and most of them ironically calling me mean. It's so funny, because I imagine if I was a man, that wouldn't be the accusation that would be leveled at me. I would be "engaging in a scathing takedown." Nobody would call me mean. You know what I mean?

Chris: Do you feel like mean is a gendered term?

Myriam: Yeah, I think it's gendered. I also think that it's an ageist term: "That's a mean old woman, that's a mean old man." But it's also very gendered. You have this notion of Mean Girls, right? And I think that's because meanness is associated with pettiness. There's an insinuation that the person perpetrating the meanness is doing so out of envy, and that the person is behaving in an arrogant way.

But, I would argue that any woman who exhibits confidence in public is really likely to be labeled as arrogant, because arrogance is excess confidence and women aren't supposed to have confidence, period. If we go out there exhibiting confidence, it's automatically "This bitch is arrogant." Because it's unearned, you know?

Chris: "Who does she think she is?"

Myriam: Exactly.

Chris: Speaking of *Mean*, your memoir has some great material about growing up mixed-race with a Mexican mother and a Polish-Mexican father.

Myriam: A lot of a lot of people who have read me for some reason gloss over that. They think that I have this Polish father and this Mexican mother. They don't realize that my dad is the one who's like, mixed as well.

Chris: That's a subject that's close to my heart. I pay close attention. Something I liked was that a mixed-race experience was just one of many elements of the story, but it didn't dominate it. I'd love to hear more about just getting those experiences on the page.

Myriam: I wanted to write about my lived experience as a person who has a heritage that other people often find quixotic. People are just like, "What? Like Mexican and Polish? How did that happen?"

And I'm just like, "They fucked. That's how it happened. My ancestors had sex."

I feel much more Mexican than I do feel Polish. I've been socialized more into a Chicano or Chicana identity rather than a Mexican identity. And when I was a child on up through adolescence, my family regularly returned to Mexico, because much of my family is still there. Since my mom is an immigrant, I could be considered second generation in the United States. And so that, to me, is a way of being that I'm much more comfortable with.

My Polish ancestry is something that I acknowledge, but it's something that I don't have much of a lived connection to. I don't speak Polish. I never knew my grandfather who was Polish. He died before I was born. And so, for me, he exists as a ghost. I hear lots of stories about him. He exists in my imagination in the form of photographs and stories. That's something that feels very remote. I'm much more tied to my Mexican-ness. And that's

WE ALL KNOW WHICH COMMUNITIES ARE BEING HARDEST HIT BY THE PANDEMIC.

IT'S BROWN PEOPLE.

LET'S NOT FUCKING PLAY.

also because I'm, like, identified as such in the world. People see my family as a Mexican family. People see my family as an immigrant family. My mom speaks with a really strong accent, so when we're out in public, we're coded as Mexican. We live that way.

Chris: Tell me more about the AskBiGrlz podcast.

Myriam: That podcast started because of my friendship with MariNaomi. My first tour with Sister Spit was a tour that Mari was on also and she and I gravitated toward one another. MariNaomi had been batting around the idea of doing a podcast, but wasn't sure how she wanted to center it. And then, for some reason, she was like, "Advice! We'll do an advice podcast!"

I was like, "I don't know that I have any qualifications, but let's do it. We can give shitty advice together. It'll be fun. Like, I wouldn't take advice from me. But um, but if you want it, I'll give it."

So we decided to launch it. Our listeners will write asking for advice ranging from, like, "How is it that I ought to train this new pet?" To, "How should I shave my pubic hair?" To, "How should I ask this person on a date?"

On occasion, we also have guests—artists, writers, thinkers—and we're likely to push the podcast more in that direction.

Chris: Just one more question. What are you reading these days?

Myriam: There are so many things that are on my reading list. I tend to consume a lot of news and essays. So I read from a lot of different journals and I read on the screen a lot.

Right now, as far as an actual book as object, I'm reading *Minor Feelings*, which is by Cathy Park Hong. She's a poet. These, however, are essays about the lived Asian-American experience. In her case, the experience of a Korean-American woman working as a poet in the United States. So I highly, highly, highly recommend it. It's a beautiful collection. A heartbreaking collection, too.



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VOICES IN THE NEW DECADE



BAD MOVES

INTERVIEW BY DONNA RAMONE
PHOTOS BY ALEC PUGLIESE AND
CHEY ESPEJO
LAYOUT BY LAUREN DENITZIO



When crashing at a friend's, I noticed a small, framed art piece above a mirror—"Queer punx run this town." greater scheme of things, that statement was hard fought and not yet won, but here and now, it was hopeful, defiant, and true. Leading that same call out of Washington DC is Bad Moves, with their power pop catchiness, deep emotional lyrics, and personal fight to make every town more just, no matter who runs it.

Though we hope these interviews may transcend time, and be relevant and interesting to an audience in any

version of our unwritten futures, we still exist as reactionary beings within a point of time. At this moment in time we're frozen by a virus. A pandemic ended all touring, every show, and we're now struggling to create and connect without the foundational, collective way we know how.

Bad Moves is trying to adapt, like we all are. Their first full-length, *Tell No One*, was on regular rotation during my morning sprint to the bus stop, as I waited for the day they would tour. Their second LP *Untenable* was just released, and no one is sprinting or touring anywhere. Where there was

once a packed living room of people singing along, there are now internet-hosted shows playing in our own empty living rooms. We're sad, and things are harrowing. But that doesn't mean we can no longer sing and dance. *Bad Moves* reminds us we can have both: talk about how shitty it is, while dancing our breaking hearts out.

David Combs—Guitar, Vocals
Emma Cleveland—Bass, Vocals
Katie Park—Guitar, Vocals
Daoud Tyler-Ameen—Drums, Vocals

Donna Ramone: So... how is everyone?

David Combs: It's a challenging time, I think, for everybody. Everybody's feeling it in different ways—does that sound accurate?

Emma Cleveland: Yeah.

Katie Park: Yeah, obviously it's a really hard and isolating time for everybody. But we've still managed to keep up a weekly band call on the nights when we usually have practice. So that's been nice to see each other's faces on at least as much of a regular basis as usual.

Donna: I've noticed that almost all of you have done Instagram Live performances to still have a creative outlet. But they're so... different.

Katie: That was really interesting. I've done two of them now, the Don Giovanni one (their record label) and then one for the venue that David books at, Comet Ping Pong. It's really different when you're looking at this tiny little phone screen. I really liked being able to go back. It's embarrassing to go back and watch yourself play music, but it's really fun to see all the people, like your friends, showing up in the comments. You don't get that same level of interaction from a regular show where you see every single thing people are saying about you, for better or for worse.

Emma: But you do get feedback from an audience about whether people are feeling it. Being on an IG Live show you're like, "I assume they're fucking loving it," but who knows [laughs].

David: Gotta come in with a good attitude.

Katie: I think I see hearts exploding from the corner! [laughs]

David: It's a funny experience to be in this scenario. You can hear every stray thought that people might be whispering to each other in the audience at a show, except everybody sees it. Some people are really funny—and that's cute—and nice to get to see. Clearly, it's not a substitute for live music. But it has its little elements that feel social and give you a little bit of that nice adrenaline.

Emma: There was one really cute moment when you were playing at the (Instagram Live) Comet show, David. You were playing (the Bad Moves song) "The Verge" and it got to the point where there's a lot of "oh oh ohs."

The whole screen was only full of people streaming, writing "oh oh oh" as if they were singing that part. We were screenshotting it because it was everyone "Oh, oh oh oh oh"ing.

Katie: It was really cute.

Emma: That felt more like being at a show. I was, like, "They're singing it! Sort of! They're typing it!"

Daoud Tyler-Ameen: I don't know that I've experienced such contradictory emotions at the same time before. Because on the one level, you're thinking about how amazing it is that people are pulling together and

HAVING THESE FEELINGS... WE CAN'T LIVE IN THE WORLD THAT STAYS UNJUST AS IT IS FOREVER.

figuring out a way to support each other. But at the same time, there's this strange dissonance of the way it's all happening. The first of these that we did, which was the one organized by our label Don Giovanni, Sammus closed the night, this incredible rapper/producer. And she was amazing. She kept talking about how weird it was to be working in this format and ending songs and not hearing applause. So after a certain point, she just started doing it herself. She would finish a song and go [cheering sound]. Which was incredible. She totally picked up the camera and walked it around her room. It was amazing. I was in tears by the end of it.

Katie: I literally cried during that set.

Daoud: But it does make you think about how amazing it is. And also the parts of live music and community that aren't replaceable.

David: Our friend Greg, who does the band Cheekface, I saw him do a live stream where he had a sample of audience applause. He was just pressing the button after every song.

Emma: He fucking would do that too [laughs]. I feel like the thing that's been hard to adapt to is you can see bands where there's a single songwriter, or a frontperson, adapting to this. And then you've seen other bands that have more collaborative singing or songwriting trying to figure out how do we represent ourselves as a band in this format when we're isolated from one another? I've seen some creative ways people have been doing it. We've been trying to play songs and had to rearrange a lot of the vocals. I've seen David have to learn all of the words in some of the songs just because there's no one else there to sing the counterpoints with. It's forced people to be creative, and it also highlights how we can present this music alone. It loses some luster, to not do it together.

Daoud: Singer-songwriters and electronic artists are finding ways to make it work. I don't know what jazz is doing right now [laughs]. Like, for real! I don't know how you do it.

David: I booked Luke Stewart, who's a local. He's becoming a jazz legend in Washington DC, and he did an improvisational noise set on the Comet Ping Pong live stream, and people were like, "... what?" [laughs] It's cool, but... yeah.

Emma: It's hard to not have a common point. It's important in music.

Donna: I feel like the one silver lining to all of it is—and I'm sure this is for a lot of people—I get to go to shows for bands without them having to come to me. It's been exciting that all of my favorite bands are doing live streams, and I get to watch all of them in one week.

Daoud: The weird silver lining for me, and this is such a weird cheap thrill, it actually has less to do with the music part of it. But when *Saturday Night Live* started doing their at-home editions, you got to see what all of the



cast members houses looked like [laughs]. Of course, you wouldn't think of it, but this is the best part of it, honestly. Better than a lot of the jokes, but I appreciate them trying.

David: We did a music video that was basically just us lip-synching on (the video conferencing software) Zoom that our friend edited into a collage-y music video. Katie sent a clip of the Backstreet Boys doing a similar thing, and they were like, "Hey, look, it's our music video." Yet somehow it feels a lot different when the people in it are dancing around their private swimming pools. You're, like, "Wow, I'm getting a different vibe from your home than from folks who are trapped in a little apartment."

Katie: The production quality was very different too. They might have had a different budget to sing "I Want It That Way."

Emma: Hmm, really? [laughs]

Donna: Everyone is talking about what the new normal is going to be. What do you think the new normal is going to be for DIY punk? Since so much of it revolves around us being in tiny places really close to each other.

David: It's hard to think about, because the range of possibilities is quite dismal on the deep end. I'm personally seeing a lot of really pessimistic takes and, well, I don't need to default to thinking that the worst case scenario is going to be the thing until that is backed up by some science, because basically science says we don't know yet.

But it's disturbing to think of the idea that there might not be spaces for live music



for who knows how long. On the other hand, the officials who talk about this kind of stuff don't have any concept that DIY music exists. There were reports that the Los Angeles mayor was like, "Live music won't start again until the end of 2021." That quote made headlines in music press. But if you look at what he was actually saying, they can't see concerts of fifty thousand, or even as low as ten thousand happening. You're not talking about a one hundred-cap venue or, like, a basement.

Katie: We've seen numbers like that in some of our shows. [laughs]

Emma: Yeah, we're gonna have to do another tour. The one where we go play smaller venues.

Katie: No more arenas for us.

Emma: We're like Green Day playing the Black Cat in DC. I just hope that the science catches up, with a robust testing and antibody program, then it will be easier to see this stuff happening faster. Other countries, like, I believe, Germany, is already moving down that road and I think that they'll be raving in Berlin sooner than we will be. I think they'll have the science to make it safer, more quickly. That's the investment that we're hoping for on this giant scale, but there's not a lot of control over how those things get budgeted.

Donna: Listening to the new album, there's a lot in those lyrics. Everything from internships, feelings associated with social capital, to the surveillance state... I'm totally guessing on some of those.

David: Oh, yeah, that's all in there. [laughs]

Emma: I feel like the overall theme, and this almost transitions from your first album, is self-acceptance and then personal growth. Growing and moving forward as a person.

Katie: I think there are definitely several moments on the record of self-acceptance—or being able to move ahead with what you have—at that present time. But it's also an album that still feels restless with the current state of things. I don't know if there's ever a sense of closure. Like, "Oh, yeah, I've accepted myself and everything's good." There's definitely a continual push against forces that are bigger than us, forces inside of ourselves. It still has a level of pushing for some kind of change. But there is a song on that record that I think of as being maybe the most illustrative of what you mentioned. In the song, "Cape Henlopen," it really is about a moment of breaking free from a lot of outside expectations, a lot of external pressure, and just finding a way to feel true to oneself in a current moment.

David: The last record, *Tell No One*, was pretty purposefully looking back into experiences from youth and seeing how that affects who you are now. And we purposefully pivoted to writing about how things are now, and how there are various traumas and anxieties that exist in contemporary living. A lot of the songs are either in that space, or in a space of—given the situation—how do we cope and move forward? Which is a form of growth and self-discovery.

Daoud: Thinking about those two records next to each other, the thing about the traumas and the disappointments that you experience in your youth, looking back at them now, is that they're inaccessible. The past will never not have happened. And so growth from that point is always about just figuring out what you can do with the person you are right now, knowing what you know.

Thinking about the songs on this record, I'm struck by how there's almost this inverse sense of inaccessibility. All the problems are happening here, right now. But a lot

of them feel so big that you may not fully understand them in your lifetime, let alone solve them. And so the feeling is less about figuring out how to resolve things and more about—like you said—how to move forward. And knowing that you're always going to be running into the wind, basically. That there's not a point where you stop, there's not a point where you arrive.

David: I like "running into the wind." That's a good metaphor. I'm gonna write it down.

Katie: Let's rename the album. [laughs]

Emma: I think since we're talking about the album name (*Untenable*) a little bit, we spent some time trying to figure out a good way to express that. The things that Daoud was talking about. These deeply personal things that are struggles that are present with us every day, the bigger picture struggles that we see in the political environment we live in, and the oppressive nature of modern life. And trying to think about what we should be doing, both personally and politically. Having these feelings—that these situations can't continue as they always have, we can't keep having the same struggles personally over and over—and we can't live in the world that stays unjust as it is forever. Things need to be shifting and changing and pushing towards a breakthrough. I think that's what we were hoping this album to tie together, songs that were deeply personal but also songs that were about the structure above us.

Donna: And yet, while processing trauma and speaking truth to power, it's fucking poppy as hell.

Katie: That's the goal!

Emma: It can't all be a sad boy album.

Katie: This is a band that loves pop music. We love pop music, we love a good chorus. We love talking about what makes pop songs really work. It's always been hard for me

to try to figure out how to write a song that feels really poppy, and also the lyrics are like, "We're having a great time!" [laughs] Well, actually, that's literally almost exactly a lyric—a song that's poppy and also just totally optimistic at the same time. That's very hard. In many of these situations, the world is really wearing a lot of us down, and yet in order to keep going from day to day, we have to be able to occasionally paste a smile on our faces, or find something to pick us up and keep us moving. That's how I think about the way that we frame a lot of our music.

David: There's often not enough middle ground to satisfy me personally. Between dismal music and dismal art that sinks in the darkness of whatever it's exploring, and poppy, optimistic, energetic music that's strictly escapism. I feel like you'll hear pop artists be like, "The world doesn't need a dark song right now." They just want to forget about it and have a party song. Sometimes that's true. But sometimes you want a little bit of both. I can't get out of my head what's dark in life right now, but also, if I'm too much in that place and don't have any sense of optimism, or moving forward with pessimism ingrained, that's not a place I want to be at either. I feel like that's baked into the band concept, trying to be somewhere in the middle of those spaces.

Daoud: Embracing the tension between those extremes is the only way to get anything done, right? If you're one million percent optimistic, then you probably don't have the best sense of what's actually going on in the world and your own life. If you're one million percent a downer, then it's probably hard to just get up in the morning. I feel like when I say it like this, it sounds really obvious, but so much of just getting through the day is

about landing somewhere in the middle. And that's about tension. It's about knowing that there are forces bigger than you and they're pulling you one way or another. And to move forward, you have to pull against them.

David: Run into the wind, if you will.

Daoud: If you will. Just gonna find a way to keep saying it. That's the remix album. [laughs]

David: We released the one single so far ("Party with the Kids Who Wanna Party with You"). Getting to have people react to it, and be like, "Here's something that was a bright spot," in this time when there are very few bright spots, it makes you feel like you're accomplishing something. At least for some small amount of people, in that way. Donna, we were on that *Bananas* listening party call the other day, and not to downplay other good things that happened, but it was the highlight of my month. (The *Bananas* held a virtual listening party for their new album *Don't Go Towards the Light* on April 23, 2020.)

Donna: Not only did it give me something exciting and special, but in the chat were people who I've lost touch with or I don't see a lot, and all of us were screaming each other's names while listening to an album by a band that means so much to all of us. Afterwards, as soon as the feed ended, all of us started messaging each other. You know what? The pandemic is terrible, but this little moment came from it. I think I might be able to sail through this on that alone.

David: That's really great. The same thing happened to me. A bunch of old friends, we were chatting in the box, and then when the Zoom call was over we all started texting. That's a powerful thing that the *Bananas* did for a hundred people on a Zoom call. We just had this music that's helping get us through a hard time and connect to each other in a time when it's really hard to connect with

**THE WORLD IS
REALLY WEARING
A LOT OF US DOWN,
WE HAVE TO BE ABLE
TO OCCASIONALLY
PASTE A SMILE ON
OUR FACES, OR FIND
SOMETHING TO PICK
US UP AND KEEP
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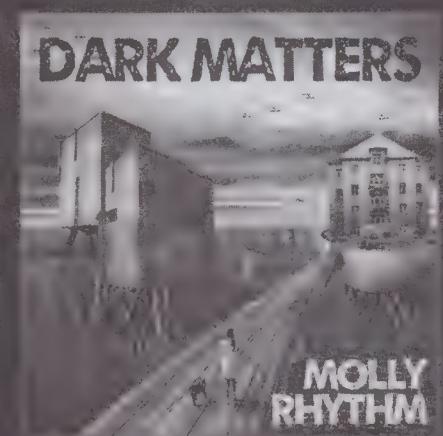
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SCREAMING AT TRAFFIC
I DON'T LIKE SPORTS
LIMITED EDITION VINYL

Debut album from the Punk Rock cosmonauts from Winnipeg, Mb, members from The Bomb, The Canada, who are made up of Duncan Methadones, and Bow & Spear. This is an urgent and catchy album, produced by Derek Grant (Alkaline Trio) & Rodrigo Palma (Saves the Day).



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each other. I don't know how far we've come from the original question, but when music can be that, I feel like that's a really important thing.

Katie: Talk about a band that can write a poppy chorus out of some dismal-ass subject matter! The Bananas are, like, heart-wrenchingly, extremely, a pop jam.

Donna: I think it showcased just how important creativity and art and music are to our lives, as generally downplayed as it is, as not "essential."

David: Certainly, economically, musicians are very much categorized as non-essential workers at this time. To the point where, like we were talking about before, even if a lot of the economy opens up, it might be a long time before live music is a thing that can happen and help bands and artists sustain themselves. But I think you're trying to say something positive, and I turned it negative very quickly. Do over. [laughs]

Donna: Hey, these are trying times and we're all just trying.

TRYING TO HAVE ANY KIND OF CREATIVITY AND ART BE AN ESSENTIAL PART OF YOUR LIFE MEANS COMMITTING YOURSELF TO A CERTAIN LEVEL OF PRECARITY

Emma: There are those of us that are—and I'm amongst these type of people—that having something to look forward to in the future is very motivating. So even through all the insecurity, I know David's probably encountering bands that are dealing with this the same way. They're booking. People trying to continue to think about going on tour, playing music, being able to play shows in the future, even though it's not a sure thing. It's the feeling of planning towards

that reality that keeps us moving and making music, releasing it, and feeling connected to people through that, whether it has to happen on the internet, or whether we can eventually be out there playing the songs live.

I said this before—I do think the synergy of people being in the same room playing music together, especially if there are other people there to witness, but even just amongst ourselves, is something that I really have been missing. As somebody who mostly enjoys being creative in collaboration and not as much as a "lock me in a one-bedroom apartment and I'll write an album by myself" person, there's a lot to be to be missed there. Looking forward to that, and planning towards that, and figuring out what's gonna let that be the case in the future is motivating.

David: Ditto.

Daoud: I disagree! [laughs]

Donna: It's all a battle. All of it. Demanding DIY and punk be at the table, making space for queer punks, making space for ourselves. Moving forward. Knowing how important all of this is. It's... it's running into the wind.

Daoud: What have I done?

Emma: Your key thing is coming up with a catchphrase. That's very much a Daoud trait.

Daoud: I guess so.

David: The way you phrased that Donna, it felt like the end point of a documentary, and then the sweeping music comes in.

Daoud: It's in the songs on the record though, right? If you're listening, even though hopefully you're dancing at the same time, there are songs about how trying to have any kind of creativity and art be an essential part of your life means committing yourself to a certain level of precarity, if you're most people. There are songs about how the basic requirements—of going to work, and being social, and being a person at a job—can flood the senses with anxiety and chip away at your sense of who you are. All of it's there. And that's before the world started ending; that was our normal, at best. Being trapped inside and needing to connect in these strange ways is hammering home that sometimes it can feel like art and creativity is your best shot of conceptualizing how your world could look different. If you're just looking around and you can't imagine how any of what ails you could feel any better, and then you commit yourself to a creative way of going about it, that can be the first step a lot of the time.



ALEC PUGLIESE





ONE PUNKS GUIDE TO

John Waters

By Billups Allen

Illustrations by Codey Richards

Layout by Todd Taylor

One rainy weekday, my friend and I went to a small Baltimore shop specializing in mid-century antiques called Hampden Junque. The store is next to a building adorned with a three-story-high pink flamingo. The pink flamingo acts as an unofficial mascot of the city. You'll see them a lot, especially if you patronize small restaurants, junk shops, and bookstores. A flamingo is a nod to cult filmmaker John Waters, a Baltimore native who uses the city and its residents as the backdrop for his transgressive comedy films. His film *Pink Flamingos* (1972) is tag-lined as "an exercise in poor taste." Its offenses include rape, murder, incest, cannibalism, cop killing, bestiality, necrophilia, and sadism. And yes, as I mentioned, it's a comedy. The movie is loud. People scream their lines most of the time. It's often kinda gross. Its conventions sink way below an acceptable level of filth and obnoxious behavior without being prurient. Most of the actors look like they are performing on a dare. Maybe even under duress. It triumphs in anarchy. It dares you to enjoy it.

I first saw *Pink Flamingos* at The Key Theater in Georgetown, Washington, D.C. during a twenty-fifth anniversary screening in 1997. I was a fledgling film buff, enough of one at the time to trust the theater's taste in programming. I was adventurous enough to have sought out "cult" films with a reputation like *The Toxic Avenger* (1984) and Ken Russell's *Whore* (1991). I had also seen Waters's 1988 hit *Hairspray* and followed his career to *Serial Mom* (1994). *Flamingos* had a freshly minted MPAA rating of NC-17.

Yet the film's sleazy reputation lurked in dark alleys for twenty-five years. I was actually scared of it when I sat down to watch it. I had no idea what to expect. The fear of the unknown prevailed: what could be ensconced in this film that would cause people to revile it for so long? The film contains a subversive atmosphere outside of the outrageous themes. The 16mm film stock and wobbly sound editing lend the film a documentary feel, as if the audience is privy to conversations they're not supposed to be a part of. It seemed to me the characters could discover I was there and pull me into the story at any minute. It forced me to form likable alliances with despicable people. I laughed a lot. I definitely thought more about it when I left the theater. In the end, I wanted to be a part of it the same way I wanted to make the walk down a long and scary alley to get inside Washington D.C.'s Hung Jury Pub many years earlier to see my first live punk show.

Inside Hampden Junque we ran into actor Lawrence Gilliard Jr. Normally I don't know what to say to famous people, but he was very friendly and Junque is a tiny store packed with shelves of neat stuff. The store has posters from many eras of Waters's career. Lawrence and I bonded briefly over the variety of John Waters-related memorabilia. Waters is known for his generous nature, particularly when it comes to supporting bookshops around Baltimore. It's not unlike him to stop by and autograph a few things for the benefit of an independent store.

Gillard was most enthusiastic when I asked about his small role in Waters's film *Cecil B. Demented* (2000). Gilliard had a major role on *The Wire*, one of the most popular television shows in history. But he was energized when I mentioned his supporting role in a film he acted in eighteen years ago. He was aware of what you discover quickly in Baltimore: to be close to John Waters is to be close to a minor deity. He is a hero to the punk, unruly, and unclean struggling to remain relevant in Trump's America. Pictures and paintings of him are prominently displayed in bookstores and restaurants all over the city. Waters's career has pushed the boundaries of and questioned the sincerity of modern behavior. His films create lovable characters out of perverts and criminals. They question rational behavior as fetishistic. And, if you're in Baltimore long enough, Waters himself can often be spotted. He still lives there and frequents the bars and stores. He's as unlikely a figurehead as you could ask for, but he champions Baltimore to the world, and Baltimore appreciates it regularly.

Still, Waters and Baltimore arrived at their love affair after the end of a long road.

Early Life

John Waters was born in Baltimore in 1946. He was raised in a middle-to-upper-class neighborhood and lived most of his life in the city he would become synonymous with. As a child, he was a fan of the puppet show *Punch and Judy*. He made his own puppets and produced shows elaborate enough for him to be hired for children's parties. His private education instilled an early interest in art and books, but Waters was drawn to the seedier side of life and eventually into Martick's, a beatnik bar where he met some of his future collaborators in both crime and film.

Waters drank in the alley with his neighbor and eventual collaborator Glenn Milstead, who later became well-known as his stage persona Divine. As teenagers, the two had a penchant for shoplifting books, records, clothes, and whatever else they felt they needed. Milstead had a knack for scams, particularly getting credit in false names. He threw elaborate parties—affairs with flowers, catering, and drugs—using his parent's names for the bookings and then just ripped up the bills when they arrived at home. These parties were the beginnings of identifying allies for the production of films.

Waters also developed some unfathomably clever scams, like wearing a torn pair of tennis shoes to high-end department stores and claiming they were damaged on the escalator. He complained until they gave him money for a new pair. Waters surmised in his book *Shock Value* (1981) that many of his and Milstead's scams worked because people didn't want to deal with them and would give in just to get rid of the odd couple. This ability to wedge himself into a confrontation showed early creativity and served him well when he made the leap to film.

The 8mm Camera

After World War II, the advancement of camera technology left space in people's lives for pursuits such as photography. Leisure



time became a trait of suburban lifestyles and the post-World War II generation of children came up looking for things to do. The widespread introduction of affordable 8mm cameras for capturing family moments also inspired a generation of kids to get out in the yard and tell a story.

Waters's first two short films were shot on 8mm film. From the start of his foray into movies, Waters's inclination to push the boundaries of bad taste was a prevalent theme in his work. He made actors out of his pool of friends and acquaintances. This stable became known early on as the Dreamlanders. Waters made his first film at eighteen, 1964's *Hag in a Black Leather Jacket*. The film features long-time collaborator Mary Vivian Pearce. The seventeen-minute narrative follows the story of an interracial couple joined in matrimony by a member of the Ku Klux Klan. The film cost thirty dollars to make and was shown in a local coffee house. It may seem like inauspicious beginnings, but in the age before the internet and before the indie film explosion of the '90s, there were few outlets for independent producers to screen films. The act of Waters producing, writing, casting, filming, editing, and exhibiting his first work exemplifies a microcosm of the independent film industry in which Waters's films would eventually flourish.

Waters attended and quickly abandoned NYU film school. He referred to his interest in education as a "charade" in *Shock Value* and went on to say "...after attending a few classes and realizing that we'd have to watch the Odessa Steps sequence from *Battleship Potemkin* until it came out our ears, I immediately decided never to attend another class." He also mentioned his friends were kicked



out of the dorm for smoking pot in the building. Waters stayed in New York while the semester carried on without him. He stole books from the school store and sold them to go to movie theaters all over the city, sometimes seeing as many as four films a day. He says this period in his life gave him a much better perspective on film than if he had attended classes. He returned to Baltimore soon after and experimented with LSD.

Waters made his second 8mm film, *Roman Candles*, in 1966. The film contains almost no plot, but includes themes that would become future trademarks: including a bold interest in criminality and religious iconography. This film's more bizarre scenes include a nun drinking a beer, a drag queen on a motorcycle, and a press conference with Lee Harvey Oswald's mother. The film was made to be projected by three 8mm projectors, creating a forty-minute split screen experience. Inspired by the films of Andy Warhol, it's not his most accessible piece of work, but it does act as a landmark, establishing the standard for quality of Waters's early pictures. Waters worked with people and materials he had access to. When his access expanded, the quality of his films increased exponentially. *Roman Candles* also marked the assembly of some of his constant collaborators. Although the group morphed a bit from film to film, Waters was creating his own stars among the Dreamlanders—a group that regularly acted, did production, and became a signature element of his films.

Mink Stole, a childhood friend and regular at Milstead's parties, is a master of hyperbolic acting. Stole made her first appearance in *Roman Candles*, along with hairdresser David Lochary. It was also the introduction to Glenn Milstead's persona Divine. As a three-hundred-plus pound actor, Milstead was not the obvious choice to play a Jayne Mansfield-type, but pulled it off to eventual international acclaim.

These films have recently been exhibited in museum shows in the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York City. These films get more attention as Waters's work moves slowly into the context of high art.

Waters's 16mm Films

Eat Your Makeup has a clear narrative, coming off more like a story than the experimentation of earlier work. It follows the story of a nanny (Maelcum Soul) kidnapping girls and forcing them to model in front of her boyfriend (Lochary) until they die. The twenty-seven-year-old Soul was an early muse for Waters: "I realized I had met my first real star. Maelcum Soul was her real name, and I was totally in awe of her..." She was "wearing maroon hair, chalk-white face powdered, ten pairs of fake eyelashes, and more eye makeup than any girl has ever worn anywhere in the United States." Soul passed away before production started on the next film. "We fought our way to her funeral through the riots following Martin Luther King's death," Waters remembered, "and were shocked to see her laid out without her usual makeup... her mother managed to sooth mourners by pulling out eight-by-ten-inch glamour shots of Maelcum."

Waters's next project, 1969's *Mondo Trasho*, was his first film shot with a full-length running time. This elongated undertaking required a budget. He borrowed two thousand dollars from his father and immediately cast Milstead as Divine in the lead. He described the genesis of *Mondo Trasho* in his book *Shock Value*: "I wanted to make real trash this time... and I knew Divine would make the perfect star." The two were fans of Jayne Mansfield and Divine's image was further cemented while trying to emulate Mansfield's "blonde bombshell" persona. Waters refers to *Mondo Trasho* as a "gutter film." Its trashy themes, raunchy

WATERS HAS A KNACK FOR DARING YOU TO ROOT FOR UNLIKABLE CHARACTERS.

music, and grainy film stock lend the film an anti-authoritarian aesthetic.

Mondo Trasho is the only film from this era made available as a home video release. The movie has little dialogue and relies mostly on music cues to drive the on-screen action. Here is an example of Waters scoring film directly from his record collection. The soundtrack includes raunchy soul and early rock'n'roll singles from artists like Ike Turner, Link Wray, and Little Richard. Also included are some heavy hitters like Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley. The home video is out of print and has since become a rare collector's item, due to problems with the music rights. Securing music rights is an issue that would rear its head several times later in Waters's career as home video became more popular. *Mondo Trasho* has never been re-released because the music rights are too expensive. Waters has said the music rights could cost up to a million dollars. As the rules of intellectual property become more complicated and easier to enforce due to the Internet, some of his early work cannot be shown outside of a museum setting. It is an issue he discusses regularly in books and at appearances as a warning to young filmmakers.

Similar to how Jayne Mansfield is a pop culture influence on Divine's look, taking ideas from current events is a Waters theme apparent in his next 1970 short, *The Diane Linkletter Story*, a film based on the story of a newscaster whose daughter allegedly jumped off a building thinking she could fly because she was on acid. Divine played Linkletter and the short plays as a grotesque parody of a delinquency warning film on the dangers of drugs and youth culture. It's really just a silly short, but documenting real life tragedy often comes under the purview of bad taste. The parodic nature and context of the film being produced a day after Linkletter's suicide was hard to defend and Waters called this piece "The worst taste thing I ever did."

Multiple Maniacs (1970)

Pre-production for *Multiple Maniacs* took place in 1969. The Manson murders had been committed but the Mansons had not yet



been caught. "This crime," Waters wrote, "would have a profound influence over the entire making of the film.... I decided that Divine would take credit for the murders in the film. I figured that if the murderers were never caught, there would always be the possibility that *maybe* Divine really *did* do it." It was the end of the peace and love movement of the '60s and a country-wide fear of youth culture gripped the nation. African American leaders fighting for change were regularly assassinated. Groups like the Black Panthers and The Weather Underground were in the news upsetting middle class norms. Violence during protests of the Vietnam War was the norm and on the news. Waters pulled details for his films right out of the news.

In Waters's camp, the Dreamlander team and their roles in the films were becoming solidified. The film opens on David Lochary dressed as a slightly tattered ringmaster with long whiffs of bleached-out hair forming a stylish mullet and a comely handlebar mustache, convincing people to enter a tent to see "The Carnival of Freaks." Mink Stole can be seen in the audience. She returns later in the film to play a prostitute whose specialty is getting people off using a rosary. The general plot of the film is Lochary and his wife Divine travel around with the traveling freak show and, once the patrons are fully grossed out, robbing them at gunpoint. This plot device reflects Milstead's and Waters's early knack for conceiving unusual scams. The robberies keep Divine in furs and food. (Decadence is a driving force in many of Divine's roles.) Divine's overwhelming desire to have the finer things pushes her to commit crimes. The film ends with her being dramatically hunted for justice Frankenstein-style.



The Hays Code and the Hollywood Renaissance

By the time *Multiple Maniacs* was being exhibited, a code enforcing oppressive rules in the film industry's standards was unraveling. The Hays Code was a strict list of things you couldn't do in films, put into effect after moralists in the early 1930s decided the film industry was selling pornographic and un-American images in the movies without being monitored. This is why American films of a certain era seem particularly pious and/or devoid of controversial themes, or confusing when trying to broach or transfer controversial themes from their original texts.

The Hays Code was vaguely written to empower studios to make cuts in production. It began to erode slowly during the 1960s when younger counterculture-conscious audiences were going to the movies. Foreign films with more mature themes also found their way into America, making American movies look immature by comparison. This period is condensed into an era called The New Hollywood and is academically often associated with *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967). *Bonnie and Clyde* became notorious for its portrayal of sex and violence—a relatively tame portrayal by today's standards. Much of the sex is abstract and the most violent gun battle scenes in the film wouldn't pass as mildly gory compared to the tamest modern horror films.

The Hayes Code worked to bully filmmakers in a similar way to the modern Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the organization putting ratings on films shown in major movie chains in America. Waters would have his share of trouble with the MPAA as he moved into making higher budget films, but up through *Multiple Maniacs* he was flying under the radar of mainstream success as the standard of acceptable behavior in film eroded quickly. It only took five years from the release of *Bonnie and Clyde* for Waters to release one of the most notorious films ever made.

Pink Flamingos (1972)

Pink Flamingos has been either edited severely for content or banned altogether in several countries. The film includes characters engaged in institutional rape, sex trafficking, eating excrement, forced impregnation, selling children, and a yogi with unbelievable control of his asshole.

Similar to *Multiple Maniacs*, *Pink Flamingos* is the story of two groups of reprehensible people antagonizing each other. Waters has a knack for daring you to root for unlikeable characters. The plot of the film centers around two groups of criminals. Divine portrays Waters's centerpiece character Babs Johnson, a criminal named by the local Maryland newspaper as "the filthiest person alive." A local couple, Raymond (David Lochary) and Connie Marbles (Mink Stole), run a human trafficking ring where women are kidnapped and forced to have babies so the Marbles can sell them. The rest of the movie is the back and forth battle between the Marbles and Divine's crew as each try to be more and more despicable than their previous act.

What's so astounding about *Pink Flamingos* is the enduring legacy. This is a film your mom might have heard of even if she hadn't seen it, or lied about having seen due to decorum. Part of *Pink Flamingos*' longevity is attributed to years of screenings where curious audiences attended to see what all the fuss was about. Before the pre-home video era, movies like *Pink Flamingos* and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) were shown at midnight when college students, weirdos, and insomniacs were anxious to take part in strange worlds through osmosis. The lure of a film uptight, "moral" people didn't want you to see was the siren call of the '70s late-night screening. The movie holds an illicit allure. The advent

PINK FLAMINGOS IS LOW-CLASS ANARCHY.

of affordable VCRs added longevity to the movie's ability to be seen at a person's own convenience and in relative anonymity.

Besides the various outrageous plot points, the actors found their marks as compelling people living outside of society with surprising resources. The Marbles had unorthodox hair color and deep pockets to wage war against the most despicable people on earth. Edith Massey portrayed her most memorable character, The Egg Woman: Divine's strange mother who sits in a playpen all day waiting for the man who delivers the eggs to arrive. The characters at odds with themselves in their diegetic worlds was not the whole concept, but the idea that under a rock somewhere lurked the leftovers of American mainstream culture—a culture obsessed with façades.

One of the most stunning shots in the film is a montage of Divine shot from a car window walking along busy Baltimore streets to the tune of Little Richard's "The Girl Can't Help It" (an example of a song Waters did not acquire the rights for). The reactions of the locals captured are actual, unscripted responses from an unsuspecting crowd. People were legitimately shocked by Divine's outrageous makeup and carefree strut—head shorn half way up, creating a bizarre hairline. Eyebrows drawn on so the curve continues up the forehead. Loads of eye makeup. The reactions from the crowd on the street are genuine. Divine cultivated a distorted look presented by the standards of the plot as ultimate beauty. The crew occupied streets in Baltimore filming Divine's scenes without a film permit during a time when people were beaten up for looking half as strange.

The film continues with a series of escalating pranks between the Marbles and Divine, including the Marbles mailing her feces, Divine sneaking into their house and licking all of the Marbles belongings, and a nauseating end scene so widely discussed I'd like for this to be the first article ever never to mention it. *Pink Flamingos* holds a place at the top of the list of infamous cinema.

If you follow the progression of American film, people were shocked into accepting more sex and drug use in film that flashed



Faye Dunaway's upper thigh in *Bonnie and Clyde*. Half a decade later, *Pink Flamingos* introduced its audience to a man manipulating his asshole with great skill for over forty seconds. The soundtrack to the scene was The Trashmen's "Surfing Bird." Here is another example of Waters using his personal records as a soundtrack. The film has an excellent soundtrack of raunchy, echo-laden singles that inspired the early punk movement like "The Swag" by Link Wray. In his book *Mr. Know-It-All*, Waters continued to warn young filmmakers about the importance of obtaining music rights. "I may have shoplifted those early 45 rpm records, but the publishers and writers of those garage band obscurities sure got their money back when distributors finally paid up decades later to use them legally."

Female Trouble (1974) and Desperate Living (1977)

Pink Flamingos was followed by one of my personal favorites, *Female Trouble*, a film celebrating Waters's long-standing interest in serial killers. The film contains plenty of the signature low-class anarchy with a bit more focus on the killer's storyline. The plot follows the life of outlaw Dawn Davenport (Divine) from her time as a defiant suburban youth leading a crew of young women doing small crimes, eventually ending in a killing spree. While the protagonists are sociopathic criminals, their brash anger towards conventional suburban living makes them extremely likable to punk rockers tired of the quiet of the suburbs.



Davenport becomes impregnated by Earl Peterson (also played by Divine) and is forced to exist on the sleazy side of Baltimore where she strips, works as a waitress, and commits petty crimes to get by. Davenport's feral child grows up to be a belligerent teen played by Mink Stole. Stole's angry wailing of her dialogue and undersized dress (presumably because she never got another one after childhood) stands out as she screams some of the best lines in the movie: "I wouldn't suck your lousy dick if I was suffocating and there was oxygen in your balls."

Another memorable quote comes from Edith Massey and also appears in full at the beginning of the first *Sloppy Seconds* album. "I worry that you'll work in an office, have children, celebrate wedding anniversaries; the world of the heterosexual is a sick and boring life." This sentiment is supported by much of Waters's work up to this point. The headline is always that it's better to die a freak than live a normal life. In the world of *Female Trouble*, hetero-normative behavior is considered boring and unappealing. The standard for luxury and beauty is centered around the Lipstick Beauty Salon run by David Lochary's character Donald Dasher. Lipstick is a chaotic place where complaints by normative people are ignored and mocked. Lochary even encourages Dawn Davenport's crime sprees, insisting that her crimes and brand of anarchy are beautiful.

Sadly, David Lochary passed away before the production of *Desperate Living*. Lochary ignored an injury sustained while on PCP. He eventually bled to death. He had been a major contributor to Waters's work, not only as an actor, but also doing hair and makeup for many of the productions. It's a sad testimony to the edgy lifestyles suggested in the films. Lochary would not be the last Dreamlander to pass early.

Divine was also notably absent in the film. Divine's notoriety was spreading, performing in a theater during the production of *Desperate Living*. The remaining Dreamlanders assembled for the filming. Produced almost entirely in a studio, *Desperate Living* has a more focused look. Waters described the film as a "lesbian melodrama... dealing with mental anguish, penis envy, and political corruption."

He said the movie was made with "neurotic adults with the mentalities of eight-year-olds in mind." The film follows irrational upper class suburbanite Peggy Gravel (Mink Stole). Gravel kills her husband in a fit of hysterical rage and is helped by her four-hundred-pound maid Grizelda (Jean Hill). After relocating to a fictional town called Mortville where criminals and people with strange fetishes can hide from the world, the social standing between Grizelda and Peggy dissolves. The two become lovers.

The common Waters plot trope of a group of misfits against the world exists here, but the movie has a different tone focusing on the drama between Grizelda and Peggy. Part of this shift is due to Divine's absence and Mink Stole's hyperbolic acting becoming a focus of the comedy. Stole bellows disgusting lines of dialogue with operatic emotion and efficiency. In spite of how ridiculous the actual situations of the film—and how Waters's unique brand of disgusting humor is prominent through the film—the movie has also been noted among early feminist texts as a film showing empowered women walking away from their nuclear family-imposed roles.

Desperate Living, like many of his films up to this time, made money by following a tried-and-true, loose business formula. Waters utilized a guerilla philosophy of filming by choosing thrifty methods of shooting, like stealing shots without a permit when he was able. He was also economical with his sets and props. Despite this formula which had served him well over the past years, *Desperate Living* did not attract the late-night movie crowd as well as *Pink Flamingos* and *Female Trouble*. Home video dispersed the midnight movie crowd to individual living

THE HEADLINE IS ALWAYS THAT IT'S BETTER TO DIE A FREAK THAN LIVE A NORMAL LIFE.

rooms where they could rent a video for a dollar and act any way they wanted without reprisal from fellow movie-goers. People were also becoming less easily shocked. But the '80s were a turning point for Waters's resources. The quality of his work was reaching a tipping point where he would be able to compete in a mainstream market.

1981

1981 was a big year for Waters's vision. *Polyester* was given a bigger budget. The movie had a star attached, '50s heartthrob Tab Hunter. Hunter's celebrity clout had slightly diminished from his time as a teenage heartthrob, but he was still a notable celebrity, and a hero of Waters personally. The production values were noticeably higher, beginning with the first shot: an aerial view of suburban Maryland. Here Waters sets the scene for a story lurking beneath the clipped hedges and backyard swimming pools of suburbia. No longer were Waters's anarchic characters let loose on the world. *Polyester* finds them bubbling under the surface of a suburban façade.

During the production of *Polyester*, *Multiple Maniacs* was declared to be "obnoxious, but not legally obscene" by a Maryland judge during a lawsuit over a late-'70s screening. *Polyester*'s new and refreshing elements bring relatability to the surface that were hard to come by in Waters's earlier films. Suburban angst inherent in the characters brings the story home for the viewer in a way that is less caustic. Whereas *Pink Flamingos*' success lies on the viewer's sense of voyeurism, *Polyester* shows as a caricature of families you might know—perhaps not as extreme in direct behaviors—but a family dealing with everyday problems like status, drug addiction, and the oppressive nature of nosy neighbors. Whomever you root for in *Polyester*, they are delegated into basic structures in society that put them in a struggle between good and evil. This slight shift in character recognition had a hand in Waters's greatest mainstream success as a filmmaker.

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION FROM ERIC TOOS
COMEDIAN AND AGING PUNK POCKER (PARTY WRECKERS, FANGS INT)
ARTWORK BY JOSUE JIMENEZ (EVERYONE MUST DIE)
AND JOEY IMAGE (MISFITS, FOREVER HORROR)

FEATURING MUSIC FROM:
ELECTRIC FRANKENSTEIN
THE BIBLE BEATERS
WIMPY RUTHERFORD & THE CRYPTICS (EX-QUEERS)
THING SLOTH
PARTY WRECKERS
WARBOYS U.S.
TIME OUT TIMMY
THE FILL INS (FEATURING JEFF CLAYTON)
NJ BLOODLINE
FOREVER HORROR (EX-MISFITS)
THE BODY BAGS
SATANIC PANIC
OUR SOULS
THE JASON'S
BILLYBREWS405
BEV RAGE AND THE DRINKS
HOME FOR THE DAY
SUMERU
POISON BOYS
RANDY BUTTSEX
NUCLEAR DESOLATION
GRAVEYARD BOULEVARD
EVERYONE MUST DIE
DREAD CABINET
NATE FUNK
PISS WIZARD

**"IF YOU HAVEN'T BEEN CONVINCED THAT YOU NEED THIS IN YOUR COLLECTION YET,
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY YOU'RE READING THIS ZINE!" - GABBA GABBA HUH?**

"I'M BUMMED THERE ARE ENOUGH BAD BANDS AROUND TO FILL A CD LIKE THIS." - RAZORCAKE

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The film also has a hint of novelty showmanship utilized by one of Waters's proclaimed heroes, William Castle. Castle was an early purveyor of theater gimmicks to make B-grade horror films more fun for kids. Castle invented gimmicks to bring attention to his films, like electrifying seats and having people run through theaters dressed as spooks. Waters cites Castle as inspiration for giving theatergoers an Odorama card at screenings of *Polyester*. Using screen prompts, the viewer scratched and discovered various unappealing smells along with the film.

Polyester also finds Divine's persona gaining a new dimension as some of the glitz and glamour of her furs and punk dresses are replaced with suburban mom clothes and a normal-looking wig. Divine portrays a stay-at-home mom at her wits end with her kids. Her daughter is dating a criminal named Bo-Bo Belslinger (Stiv Bators) and her son Dexter (Ken King) is a glue sniffer obsessed with women's feet. Her husband Elmer (David Samson) is having an affair. Divine's mom persona during the first part of the film exhibits a new level of acting and leads to her being swept off of her feet by the swarthy Todd Tomorrow (Hunter). Tomorrow helps change the course of her messed-up life for a while. All the immaturity desired in a Waters production are in place during *Polyester*, but Waters's ability to handle bigger budgets and Divine's elevated acting add a level of quality to the film that would pay off in his next film production.

Shock Value: A Tasteful Book about Bad Taste was also released in 1981, proving Waters's skill as an author. Waters's writing has a charm and positivity you might not expect from someone who is such

If the movie-going world hadn't heard of John Waters due to his previous transgressions, they surely knew him after the release of *Hairspray*. Waters had a lot of experience making a compelling story about outsiders struggling against an oppressive society. In *Hairspray*, loveable teenager Tracy Turnblad (Ricki Lake) plays an overweight teen whose charisma lands her a spot on the popular Corny Collins Show where her body type is not the norm. Tracy is largely bulletproof from those who try to use her weight against her. She slowly amasses a team of misfits fighting to end racial segregation on the popular show. The "freaks against bullies" trope is one he's mastered. It plays on several levels throughout the movie, most importantly, towards promoting racial equality among the teens featured on the show.

There are countless bigger-than-life characters among this cast of cult heavy-hitters alongside many of the Dreamlander regulars. Divine portrays Edna Turnblad, Tracy's reluctant but supportive mother who eventually comes around and joins her daughter's crusade to desegregate the show. During this time, Divine was scheduled to make a regular appearance on the then-hit TV show *Married with Children*. Many thought this was the opportunity Divine needed to break through to more mainstream film and television. Sadly, Divine passed away from an enlarged heart immediately after *Hairspray* was released. Divine didn't live long enough to see the long-term success of *Hairspray*. It's a shame because the film became a comedy classic and should really be considered an essential text exhibiting a place in time when Americans were sacrificing and fighting to make short strides in equality.

A BAD JOHN WATERS FILM IS BETTER THAN A DAY OF FISHING.



a purveyor of trash cinema. Incidents in his eccentric career like these are often inherently funny, but Waters's prose brings the stories to life. He really has a way of conveying a story. The book is mostly a diary of Waters's time making films. His philosophy and insight into the film industry and the world around him are fascinating. An example is a segment where he casts the misfits and associates in his everyday life in his films. This idea becomes institutionalized when Waters gives advice to others who may want to utilize this technique in their own projects: "If you think you're ugly and want to break into the silver screen, how do you go about it? ...don't bother listing all the tired one-act plays in which you starred. Concentrate on the glossy eight-by-ten that will catch the casting director's eye. My casting agent, Pat Moran, knows ugly when she sees it, always looks for 'special talent.'" To further his point, he admitted how a rumor caused him to cast the man in *Pink Flamingos* who was able to open and close his asshole on command: "I got word to him I wanted a demonstration. He showed up at my door, and I tried to be tactful. 'I hear you have something I might be interested in'... I was totally speechless—a star was born!"

Crackpot (1986) and Hairspray (1988)

Polyester and *Shock Value* set the stage for Waters to elevate his reach a bit out of the cult waters he was submerged in. Waters's second book, *Crackpot*, is a collection of essays and stories. Waters shows himself as an excellent historian, writing on a range of topics like how to tour L.A. without following tourist trends, the film career of Pia Zadora, his experiences conducting a film class in a penitentiary, and many more showing his interest in documenting the unique world surrounding him.

Among the essays in *Crackpot* is a piece called "Ladies and Gentlemen... the Nicest Kids in Town!" The article is about a local television dance show called *The Buddy Dean Show*. Between 1957 and 1964, the teenage dance party was a top-rated Baltimore TV show eclipsing even Dick Clark's *American Bandstand* in popularity. Rock'n'roll stars performed and fashionable kids danced the dances of the day. If this all sounds familiar at all, it's because this article is the basis for Waters's most successful mainstream film: *Hairspray* (1988).

In Waters's book *Mr. Know It All*, the chapter dedicated to *Hairspray* is called "Accidentally Commercial." It brought Waters's work to a new echelon of society and went on to become a successful Broadway musical. "Underneath all this cockeyed glamour lives a serious actor who wants nothing more than to work every day," Waters said of Divine's career. "He's eaten dog turds, crawled through pig shit, mainlined eyeliner, eaten guts, and risked arrest by appearing in many of my films, but I've never once seen him throw a star fit." If there's any justice, the legacy of Waters and Divine will continue to grow and be synonymous with other comedy duos like Laurel and Hardy, French and Saunders, and Cheech and Chong.

You're Only As Good As Your Next Picture

Waters's ascent into mainstream success came with the price of struggling to continue to expound on his vision in the limited confines of Hollywood productions. Hollywood doesn't look to produce the next cult hit; it wants low-risk stories that make money. *Cry-Baby* (1990) and *Serial Mom* (1994) are two of his more popular mainstream films, but neither reached the heights of *Hairspray*. *Cry-Baby* was seen by the studio more as a vehicle for Johnny Depp and monitored the lengths Waters was allowed to stretch the boundaries of taste to maintain a PG rating, figuring younger people were going to be the audience for the picture. Waters's vision and mainstream cinema merged in *Hairspray*, but this anomaly didn't hold in terms of box office sales.

Cry-Baby is, in part, a musical celebrating teen movies of the '50s. The film stars and struggled with the inclusion of teen heartthrob Johnny Depp, fresh off of his iconic role as the quirky *Edward Scissorhands* (1990). After Depp's success on the 1980s television series *21 Jump Street* and before he became Hollywood's enfant terrible, the studios were concerned about his image being tarnished, particularly while filming a movie with one of the most notorious filmmakers of all time.

Waters proved he could attract a mainstream audience using his underdog formula of good-hearted lowlives battling a system placed there to keep them down. It's a fun but seemingly intentionally hollow



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movie. The script is largely centered around the songs, making it more of an Elvis-style musical throwback than a commentary on individuality. And Waters's us-against-them formula came with a price this time. Cuts to the shooting that assured a PG rating made the film sterile. *Cry-Baby* is a fun film to watch, but it's hard to ignore the missed opportunities for an excellent cast to get their hands dirty.

I count *Serial Mom* as another of Waters's best movies. It again follows a theme of misfits bubbling under the façade of suburban life. Kathleen Turner puts in a great performance as Beverly Sutphin, a woman who appears excessively straight and narrow but has a secret obsession with serial killers and eventually becomes one. Her horror movie-obsessed son, Chip Sutphin (Matthew Lillard) finds out and acts as her agent. Soon everyone is obsessed with Beverly Sutphin, a mother who kills people she finds distasteful. High points include Sutcliff prank calling her neighbor Dottie Hinkle (Mink Stole) and yelling obscenities at her. A moment that should be included as an icon of great moments in film shows Sutcliff bashing her smug neighbor Mrs. Jenson (Patsy Grady) in the head with a leg of lamb while the overture of the musical *Annie* (1982) plays on her television. Red blood stains the screen as the iconic song "Tomorrow" emanates from her television.

As Sutcliff's trial becomes a media sensation, the film also makes great commentary on the inequality fame and money bring to court cases. Waters has attended several high-profile court cases and loves true crime. Here, the movie beautifully documents the black humor inherent in these trials. The end of the story finds Sutcliff debunking all of the evidence against her one piece at a time using ridiculous counter claims and questionable techniques. She causes a known pervert's testimony to be unreliable by opening and closing her legs so he can look up her skirt. Her new notoriety causes another stoner eyewitness to recant her testimony because the stoner thinks she's cool. Projected alongside the realities of a real criminal court case, the end of the movie examines the way fame and money can influence crime in real life.

The Non-Profit Years

According to his recent book, *Mr. Know It All: The Tarnished Wisdom of a Filth Elder*, Waters's last studio film to make a profit was *Serial Mom*. Even in the age of home video and streaming, his final three films are technically still in the red. Although they are not his most popular films, there is plenty of charm found amongst *Pecker* (1998), the underrated *Cecil B. Demented* (2000), and his final film to date, *A Dirty Shame* (2004).

Pecker as a commentary on perception of outsider art is a little sophomoric in plot, but the film's humor through the expository of Baltimore's neighborhood of Hampden as a quirky, peaceful place contains realistic insights into the minutiae of an existing Baltimore neighborhood.

The story also pits N.Y.C. art dealers against the citizens of Baltimore. The film stars Edward Furlong as Pecker, an amateur photographer whose candid shots of life in Baltimore city life become sought after by a Chelsea art dealer. Success ruins Pecker's simple life in Baltimore and threatens to destroy his art. It's a cute film in its earnest commentary about the down-to-earth Pecker and the problems arising when his hobby is touted as fine art in a fickle market, but it's not as essential as some of his other films.

Cecil B. Demented is my favorite among these three later films, one that I consider among the canon of his "must-sees." As a meta-narrative, Waters again creates a gang of miscreants you can't help but root for. This time the main protagonist is a greasy filmmaker named Cecil B. Demented. Demented hates the studio system and assembles a crew of people who agree to be prepared to die for art. Demented commits a litany of crimes while producing his big move, along the way kidnapping Hollywood superstar actor Honey Whitlock (Melanie Griffin), in town to promote a banal film offending Demented's sensibilities.

It's hard to ignore the similarities between this story and the real life story of Dreamlander regular Patty Hearst. Hearst was kidnapped by a radical group called the Symbionese Liberation Army. The story of her capture and appearing to sympathize with her tormentors was major news in the early seventies and serves as an obvious influence on the film. Here again is Waters's trope of telling stories directly from the news. Demented's crew scheme relentlessly to stop the

production of *Forrest Gump 2: Gumped Again*. The cast engages in a histrionic acting style creating a chaotic world where film sets are infiltrated and bombed. The anarchic acting style drives the comedy in the film, particularly Michael Shannon's excellent interpretation of the film's best line: "Tell me about Mel Gibson's dick and balls." The film parodies a classic Hollywood ending seemingly inspired by the film *Hollywood Boulevard* (1950). *Cecil B. Demented* was not well received, but I think it's among his best later films.

Up to the point of this writing, Waters's movie career ends on one of his weakest films. I say this respectfully, as I don't think the filmmaker is totally at fault. Society has caught up to Waters's filth level, but not his sense of humor about filth. In *A Dirty Shame*, it's the normal neighbors of the city of Baltimore who are obsessed with sex. The out in the open sexuality is actually an interesting cap on his film career, as society has evolved to a point where it doesn't seem capable of being shocked by the sexual habits of others. The music elaborates on the '50s sensibility associated with middle class Baltimore with the duplicity of choosing songs with loads of double entendre in them.

It's still an enjoyable film, worthwhile for a wonderfully suspenseful session of Hokey Pokey taking place while the main character Sylvia (Tracey Ullman) visits at an elderly care facility. Sylvia is normally repressed in nature, but a head injury causes her to become sex crazed. As her "whole body in/whole body out" sequence of the hokey pokey reaches a frenzy, she places a large water bottle on the floor and puts on a strange sex show that is a perfect combination of Waters's sense of humor and Ullman's knack for physical comedy. There is also commentary about a D.C. couple recently moved into the neighborhood. They observe the strange events in the neighborhood and regularly mention how "real" Baltimore is on a regular basis. The point is the film has its moments. I'd rather see punks watching a lower quality Waters film than talking about sports. A bad John Waters film is better than a day of fishing.

Continued Success as an Author and Historian

During a recent live appearance, Waters expressed a desire to make another movie. It will be interesting to see how he goes about it. He seems to be trapped in the void between not being able to engage a big studio and the "been there, done that," of self-financing low budget pictures. His personal appearances and article writing keeps his unique point of view intact and available to the world. His role as an author and observer of modern society produced two recent books not to ignore. His 2010 collection of interviews, *Role Models*, and his chronicle of his bizarre journey across the country hitch hiking *Carsick: John Waters Hitchhikes across America* (2014) are both must-reads in his canon of work. As of late, his humor is best-expressed in the written word. Perhaps the king of bad taste has had the good taste to wait until he is inspired to make another film. There is something princely about that idea to me. Some people don't know when to quit, or when to recognize a second act in their lives. I find him more compelling as a writer nowadays. Whether or not he'll get to make another picture is yet to be seen, but his presence in the world is a mitzvah for the weirdos and freaks.

Suggested Movies

Female Trouble | *Polyester* | *Hairspray*
Serial Mom | *Cecil B. Demented*

Books

Shock Value | *Crackpot: The Obsessions of John Waters* | *Mr. Know-It-All: The Tarnished Wisdom of a Filth Elder*

Bibliography

If Chins Could Kill: Confessions of a Movie Actor, Bruce Campbell (2001)
Five Came Back, Laurent Bouzereau, Francis Ford Coppola, Guillermo del Toro, (2017)
Nightmare of Ecstasy (The Life and Art of Edward Wood Jr.), Rudolph Grey, (1994)
Edgewise: A Picture of Cookie Mueller, Chloe Griffin (2014)



TOP 5s

Adel Souto

- 1. Mortal Soul, *Ashes in the Wind* EP
- 2. Cheap Perfume, *Burn It Down* LP
- 3. Opossums, *Trashcandy* LP
- 4. Krake, *Steitkultur* LP
- 5. Lifewentpear, *About About* LP

Andy Garcia

- 1. Zenomorph, *Demo* CS
- 2. Phonophobia Records, *Noise Attack Survivor Vol. 1* CS
- 3. Nightfeeder, *Rotten* demo
- 4. La Rabia, *Consumed by Paranoia and Fear* LP
- 5. Kitchen People, *Planet Perth* CS

Anthony Mehlhaff

- Sunami, Self-titled 7"
- Brother, Self-titled 7" LP
- Mass Arrest, *Power* LP
- Enemy, *Distrust* EP
- Dicklord, *It's Soooo Boring* LP

Art Ettinger

- Alice Bag, *Sister Dynamite* LP
- X, *Alphabetland* LP
- Screeching Weasel, *Suburban Vermin*
- Straight Edge Kegger (movie)
- GG Allin And The Jabbers, *Live at the Channel* 2xCD

Bill Pinkel

Top 5 Black and Black/Trans-centered Orgs (Among Many Others) That Deserve a Donation Today

- Black Voters Matter (blackvotersmatterfund.org)
- Emergency Release Fund (emergencyreleasefund.org)
- National Bail Out Collective (nationalbailout.org)
- Bail Project (bailproject.org)
- Community Support for Robert Fuller Gofundme

Billy Kostka

- Tower 7, *Entrance to a Living Organism*
- Vertical Slit, *Live at Browns*
- Stains, Self-titled
- P22, *Human Snake*
- USA/Mexico, *Matamoros*

Chris Mason

- 1. Sial, *Tari Pemusnah Kuasa*
- 2. Cold Meat, *Hot and Flustered*
- 3. Romero, *Honey b/w Neapolitan*
- 4. Laffing Gas, *It's a Beautiful Day in the Gulch*
- 5. Run The Jewels, *RTJ4*

Chris Terry

- Primitive Teeth, second 7"
- Pink Siifu, *Negro* LP
- Sounds Of Liberation, Self-titled LP
- Grace Jones, *Warm Leatherette* LP
- Video of police fleeing their station during Black Lives Matter protests in Minneapolis

Craven Rock

- 1. *Smoke City* by Keith Rosson (book)
- 2. *The Cracking Tower: A Strategy for Transcending 2012* by Jim DeKorne (book)
- 3. *Emil Amos' Drifter's Symphony Podcast*, Episode: *The Lecturer*
- 4. *Tie: Off the Ground and on the Wall: A Doorstop Documentary and Puss in Books: Adventures of The Library Cat* (short films by Gary Roma)
- 5. Revisiting '80s Teen Movies (*Say Anything* is still gold, *House Party* still there with the laughs, *Pretty in Pink* is not fully-realized and lacking but still fun, *Some Kind of Wonderful* is easily the best of the genre. Makes me cry even more now.)

Daryl Gussin

Top 5 Favorite Recent Acts of Civil Disobedience

1. Dumping the statue in the harbor, Bristol
2. C.H.O.P., Seattle
3. Epic march through Highland Park, tie with @skateforjustice ride down Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles
2. Burning the precinct, Minneapolis
1. Guy stealing and riding around on cop horse, Chicago *Defund the Police!*
Black Lives Matter!

Deb Frazin

- 1. Cosey Fanni Tutti, *Art Sex Music*
- 2. X, *Alphabetland*
- 3. *Russian Doll* (series)
- 4. Reckling, "24 Hours" single
- 5. *Ask Dr. Mueller: The Writings of Cookie Mueller* (book)

Donna Ramone

Top 5 Favorite Songs by Black Artists to Blast outside the DA's Office (That Aren't N.W.A.'s "Fuck tha Police")

1. The Coup, "Pork and Beef"
2. The Muslims, "Call the Cops"
3. J. Dilla, "Fuck the Police"
4. Various (like, sixty Black women artists), "Freedom (Theme from *Panther*)"
5. Body Count, "No Lives Matter" (or "Cop Killer" if you're nostalgic)

Honorable mention to every single Nina Simone song. Seriously, friends, take the time to diversify those record collections.

Eric Baskauskas

Top 5 Things to Demilitarize

1. Police
2. Military
3. Racists
4. Shitheads
5. Earth

Garrett Barnwell

1. Black Lives Matter
2. My 10 year anniversary of Razorcake volunteer service!

Jamaica Dyer

1. Shut the fuck up and listen.
2. Watch the birds in your backyard.
3. Nuttal Woodpecker
4. Black Phoebe
5. California Towhee

James Spooner

Top 5 Ways to Improve Black People's Lives

1. Hire them.
2. Buy from them.
3. Stand up for them.
4. Listen to them.
5. Believe them.

Jennifer Federico

Top 5 Record Labels I Am Happy to Give My Money to

1. Deranged
2. Goner
3. Dirtnap
4. In The Red
5. Dirt Cult

Jimmy Alvarado

- Miranda Forwood Carnovsky: teacher, surrogate mom, friend. Thank you for all you gave me and so many others. Descanse en paz.
- Love and respect to my brown and black sisters and brothers, and those of other hues down with the struggle, who are raising a ruckus around the world as I type this. Fuck all fascists, including those in uniforms.
- *Occupied America*, by Rodolfo Acuña
- *The Anatomy of Fascism*, by Robert O. Paxton
- Can 2020 can just fuck right on off now, and it can take the orange menace with it? Thanks.

Jon Mule

Recent Vinyl Grabs, Support Yer Local!

1. Charlie Megira comp
2. Beehive Basement comp

being excited and hopeful about mass enlightenment and social change.

3. The Cramps, *Songs the Lord Taught Us*
4. The Ramones, *Road to Ruin*
5. The Cure, *Three Imaginary Boys*

Juan Espinosa

- Black Lives Matter. Support the movement or get fucked!
- United Mutation, *Dark Self Image* LP
- Mass Arrest, *Power* LP
- Rudimentary Peni, *Wilfred Owen the Chances* 7" tie with Newtown Neurotics, *Kick Out! Newtown Neurotics History* LP
- Yacht Club, *Brave Intelligence* 7"

Kayla Greet

- CHOP/CHAZ (Capitol Hill Occupied Protest or Autonomous Zone) in Seattle. BLACK LIVES MATTER.
- Silently marching with 60,000 people in Seattle to protest police.
- Shellshag's Resilient Bastard Fan Club! I have every Shellshag song on my membership card!
- *The Mud Ballad* by Jo Quenell
- Red Scare's virtual variety show.

Kevin Dunn

1. Alice Bag, *Sister Dynamite*
2. Raging Nathans / Starter Jackets, Split EP
3. So Cow, *But What Has That Done to the Scores?*
4. Dream Syndicate, *The Universe Inside*
5. Drakulas, *Terminal Amusements*

Kurt Morris

1. Spice, Self-titled
2. The never-ending fireworks going off in my hood
3. Make Believe, *Shock of Being*
4. Clark, *Seven Songs* EP
5. Anxious, *Never Better* 7"

Louis Jacinto

Top 5 Songs from Alice Bag's Three Solo Albums

1. "Spark" (*Sister Dynamite*)
2. "Even" (*Sister Dynamite*)
3. "Shame Game" (*Blueprint*)
4. "Se Cree Joven" (*Blueprint*)
5. "Modern Day Virgin Sacrifice" (Self-titled)

Mark Twistorthy

- Moving Targets, *Wires* LP
- Strike Under, *Immediate Action* 12" reissue
- The Whip, Self-titled LP
- Poppy, *Snakes of New Jersey* LP
- The Prof. Fuzz 63, *Owls* LP

Martin Wong

- Canceling the last Save Music in Chinatown benefit show but organizing online events for Castelar Elementary, including a Q&A with our Hong Kong movie star friend Daniel Wu and a musical performed by the sixth graders.
- Getting copies of *Razorcake*, *Cometbus*, *Punks Around*, and *MAD Magazine* in the mail.
- Listening to great new music by Alice Bag, Bad Cop/Bad Cop, Mesa Lanes, Decry, Cheifs, and X a lot. Recent Best Coast and Bleached, too.
- Rad new songs being written by The Linda Lindas.
- Shifting from being depressed about a more sterile, less fun post-pandemic world into being excited and hopeful about mass enlightenment and social change.

Mike Faloon

1. Daryl Gussin, *Loitering & Benevolence*
2. Russ Forster, *8-Track Mind* #104
3. Kayla Greet, *One Punk's Guide to Star Trek*
4. Billy McCall, *Behind the Zines* #9
5. Liz Mason, *Caboose* #12

Mike Fournier

- Lithics, *Tower of Age* LP
- *Minor Leagues* #10
- *Neutrals, Rent/Your House* 7"
- *Razorblades & Aspirin* #9
- *Road Seven* by Keith Rosson (book)

Paul Silver

1. Bad Cop/Bad Cop, *The Ride* LP
2. An Uneasy Peace, Self-titled EP
3. Joyce Manor, *Songs from Northern Torrance* LP
4. When There Is None, *Fuck Death!* LP
5. The Gay Agenda, *Penetrating* LP

Rev. Nerb

- Drakulas, *Terminal Amusements* LP
- Head, *Heil Head: The Complete Discography 1992-1997* 2 x LP
- Indonesian Junk, *Spiderbites* LP
- Chats, *High Risk Behaviour* LP
- Weird Night, *This Is Weird Night* LP

Rhythm Chicken

Top 5 Records on My Turntable Lately

- Pete Shelley, *Homosapien*
- Moving Targets, *Burning in Water*
- The Strike, *A Conscience Left to Struggle with Pockets Full of Rust*
- Giants Chair, *Prefabylon*
- K-Tel, *Looney Tunes*

Rich Cocksedge

- Truth Cult, *Off Fire* LP
- Deaf Chonky, *Harsh* digital
- Laffing Gas, *It's a Beautiful Day in the Gulch* LP
- Destinazione Finale, *In Bilico Nel Reale* LP
- Knife Club, *We Are Knife Club* LP

Rick V.

1. Anxiety Cat, *The End of Reality As We Know It*
2. Kalle Hygien, *Absolute Bomber*
3. Scraps, *Dismantle the Machine One Cog at a Time* (reissue)
4. *Mr. Gimmick* soundtrack
5. Dick Lucas uploading rare stuff on Bandcamp including his weird-ass audio book *Write the Way Up*.

Ricky Vigil

Top 5 Things Released Since Quarantine Began

1. Jeff Rosenstock, *No Dream*
2. The Mountain Goats, *Songs for Pierre Chuvin*
3. Quelle Chris & Chris Keys, *Innocent Country* 2
4. The Chinkees, *K.A. Music*
5. Sharkoid, *Deathbox*

Rosie Gonse

Top 5 Punk/Indie Bands with Black/POC Band Members

1. The Muslims
2. Pleasure Venom
3. The 1865
4. The Txilips Band
5. Big Joanie

Ryan Nichols

1. Mark Lanegan, *Sing Backwards and Weep*
2. Mark Lanegan, *Someone's Knocking LP*
3. Kittyman
4. Steve Brule
5. *Homesick for Another World* by Ottessa Moshfegh (book)

Sean Koepenick

Heavy Rotation

1. Glen Matlock, *I Was a Teenage Sex Pistol* (book)
2. BERP, "By the Door" (Crucifucks cover, *Nothing Legal* digital album)
3. Alice Cooper, "Sister Anne" (MC5 cover)
4. Supreme Commander, *Tooth and Nail* CD
5. The Dirty Truckers, "Sixteen Blue" (Replacements cover)

Theresa W.

Top 5 Records for Camping

1. Cassette, Self-titled
2. Pygmy Lush, *Mount Hope*
3. Neil Young, *Harvest Moon*
4. Elliott Brood, *Days into Years*
5. Hanalei, *We Are All Natural Disasters*

Toby Tober

Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed

1. *Ikiru*
2. *Swallow*
3. *Circus of Books*
4. *Beanpole*
5. *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*

Todd Taylor

- Black Lives Matter, Highland Park march and Pan-Pacific Park rally and march
- Drakulas, *Terminal Amusements* LP
- The Globs, *The Weird and Wonderful World of The Globs* LP
- Anxiety Cat, *The End of Reality As We Know It* LP
- Run The Jewels, *RTJ4* LP
- Western Addiction, *Frail Bray* LP tie, *Syndrome 81*, *Désert Urbain* EP

Ty Stranglehold

1. The Dicks, "The Dicks Hate the Police"
2. MDC, "Dead Cops"
3. AK-47, "The Badge Means You Suck"
4. Poison Idea, "The Badge"
5. Black Flag, "Police Story" 

ABADDON: Jarocin '84: LP

"Jarocin" was a series of festivals held in the titular Polish town throughout the '80s and '90s as a showcase of music the kids were grooving to. It became crucial to underground music because Poland at the time was part of the Warsaw Pact, which meant its government was effectively a totalitarian state. Punk and other types of music were not played on official radio stations and, thus, one of the only avenues bands had to be seen—as people were able to witness live performances of this kind of music—was at these shows. Kids would tape performances and trade them, and so on. What we have here is a recording of the band Abaddon performing at the festival in 1984. Their set is largely thrashy, energetic, and very much live, warts and all. The recording itself sounds like it came from a pristine, first-generation soundboard recording. I do wish there was more info included in the gatefold sleeve or some sorta insert to provide context, but even a cursory web search can provide much of that in a pinch.

—Jimmy Alvarado (Warsaw Pact)

ABE PARTRIDGE AND THE PSYCH PEAS: Lackluster: LP

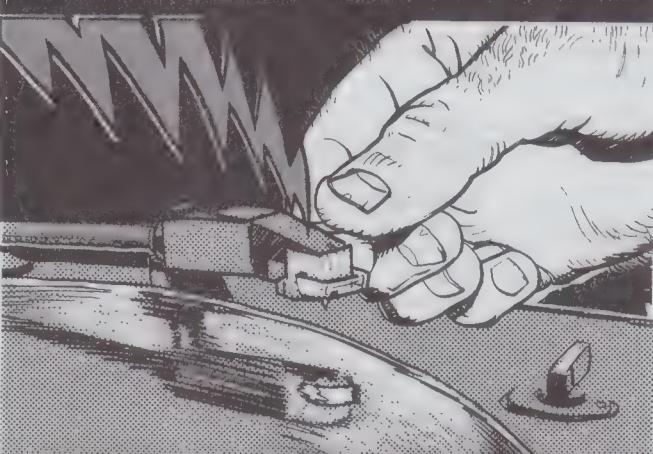
This album leans toward high-octane blues rock with some fuzz riffs attached. Abe Partridge has a back catalogue of acoustic music. Here he yell/sings monologues over these heavily distorted riffs. That sort of thing gets old for me quickly. It's competent in the groove-blues-rock sphere. It's well executed and well recorded. If that's your scene or if you're a fan of his older stuff, it's worth checking out. —Billups Allen (Self-released)

ABRAXAS: "Left Behind"/"Enough": CS
Fierce and unrelenting hardcore with reverb-drenched vocals that sound like the singer's been forced to bellow with a bucket over his head. It's a little distracting, but otherwise there's plenty of ferocity here. A release shrouded in mystery—there's, like, no information here beyond the band name and song titles. I'm certainly a fan of tapes, but with only two short songs, this essentially amounts to a cassinole, which is a drag. —Keith Rossen (Self-released)

**ACID BABY JESUS:
Selected Outtakes: 7" EP**

Acid Baby Jesus from Athens, Greece sounds ritualistic, psychedelic, and folkloric all at once. The songs pull you along like a death march and feel like the part in the movie where you realize the devil/witches drugged you. I cannot exaggerate how sick these songs are. I don't know how I missed this band until now. —Liz Jones (Slovenly, label@slovenly.com, slovenly.com)

RECORD REVIEWS



These aren't people who felt that music began and ended with the first Ramones album, these are people who felt that music began and ended with the first Ramones demo.

—Rev. Norb

ADORNS: With What Sacrifice: 7"

Post-punk with cover art by someone named Mildred Pierce—I'm in. The songs are very minimal and electronic in the vein of Cosmetics. It sounds like all the music was done on keyboards but it could really pop if they decided to add bass and guitars down the line. I'm interested to see how the band develops over their next record. —Ryan Nichols (Self-released, adornsmusic@gmail.com)

ALICE BAG: Sister Dynamite: LP

Another banger from Alice Bag and Co. This record has everything that Alice has been serving us for the last thirty-plus years, full of political and subversive anthems. She continues to develop new sounds and delivers a more than relevant message time and time again. My personal favorite on the record is "Gatecrasher"—really dark and pretty with iconic Candace Hansen's drumming coming through fast and loud. —Emily T. (In The Red)

AN UNEASY PEACE: Self-titled: 7"

The proof of concept from a convergence of spirits that took place in Austin, Texas in 2005. Four tracks that were spearheaded by one of the West Coast punk's shining lights: Lance Hahn. On guitar and the board, Stan Wright, who in his own right helped shape crust punk for the new century. And rounding out the band is Dave Wuttke from Drunken Boat, and Mikey Warm of the recently disbanded Observers. The first track could fit in on any J Church album and no one would think anything of it, but the remaining three are definitely a change of pace. Down stroke riffage with menacing, crescendoing

verses that erupt into circle pit, fist-pumping choruses. Hardcore punk by punks who aren't bogged down by the confines of predetermined genre limiters. There's a certain personality to it that instantly reminded me of Mea Culpa's *They Put You in a Gas Mask* LP, which came out around the same time. And the more I listened to this 7", the more bummed I got that it wasn't an active band with an extensive catalog. Truly spellbinding conviction from believers of the form unleashing holy hell and having a good time doing it. —Daryl (Dirt Cult)

ANTHROPIC:**Architects of Aggression: CD**

I spend so much time whining about how much I hate metal that I forgot that I actually like some of the punk subgenres with metal connections. Anthropic from Buffalo plays classic early grindcore, akin to Sore Throat or Phobia. It's their debut full length, and it's great. Proficient musicians and a scary vocalist carry the hooks, with discernably socially conscious lyrics peeping out at the surface. Available on CD from various distributors or directly from the band, this inauguration warrants LP treatment as soon as possible. —Art Ettinger (Self-released, glorioustimesdeathbook@gmail.com)

ANTICITIZEN: Warmachine: CDEP

Also available as a four-song 7", this six-song EP from New Jersey's Anticitizen is a perfect exemplar of 1990s-styled crust. Similar to hits by Dis Sucks, these raw, political tracks are full of rage, with faultless growled vocals searing into the mic. I'd imagine they slay at a basement

show, which is no small feat in these troubled times. What distinguishes Anticitizen from so many others is that they've stuck to it, with 2020 serving as their ninth year as a band. This isn't my first exposure to them, and it's an even better release than the ones I've heard before. A split release between the band and longstanding label Wiseass Records, *Warmachine* is a must for fans of the best in crust. —Art Ettinger (Wiseass, anticitizen.storenvy.com)

ANTICITIZEN: Warmachine: CDEP

I just reviewed an international comp in this issue where this band had the standout track. This is real throwback gear to the '90s Squat or Rot days of NYC with bands like Public Nuisance, Jesus Chrust, and the like—head to toe in studs and spikes, belting it out in some hellhole in the Lower East Side. It's spiky punk, but with a raw, drunken edge and anti-war lyrics. Pretty sloppy but I can dig after a 40oz. —Tim Brooks (Wiseass, anticitizen.storenvy.com)

ANTILLECTUAL: Covers EP: 7"

This four track single does what it says in the title with the Dutch combo providing its own take on four tracks from yesteryear. The choices come from The Police, Blondie/The Nerves, Ramones, and The Stooges. Antillectual applies its own smooth, melodic delivery to the four songs, with only the Ramones' "I Believe in Miracles" being a surprise choice. Each song takes well to the Antillectual treatment but my favorite is easily The Police's "Truth Hits Everybody," which fits perfectly with how the band normally sounds. —Rich Cocksedge (Fond Of Life, fondoliferecords.net)

BEAR AWAY: Self-titled: 7"

Two songs feature on this debut vinyl excursion from this quartet hailing from the North East of England. Having previously heard the band, I knew what to expect—soaring, melodic punk that certainly has an English feel to it in the tradition of Leatherface and Milloy—but with a nod towards the likes of Samiam and Timeshares from across the pond. Hopefully Bear Away can nail down an LP in the not too distant future as I know I'm ready for one. —Rich Cocksedge (Disillusioned, disillusionedrecords@gmail.com, disillusionedrecords.co.uk)

/ Engineer, arr@engineerrecords.com, engineerrecords.com

BEE BEE SEA: Be Bop Palooza: 7"

From what I can gather, Bee Bee Sea are an Italian band that worship at the altar of Dirlap Records and they have released this record as an ode to the character Be Bop from the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. I think. Yep, that sounds about right, and it sounds great to me. If anything that I have mentioned in

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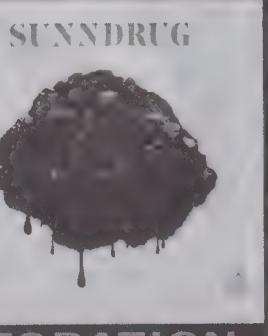
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the above couple of sentences sparks an interest, you best be snagging a copy of this. —Ty Stranglehold (Wild Honey, wildhoneyrecords.bandcamp.com)

BENNY AND THE ROIDS:

Self-titled: 7" EP

Gloriously sloppy, gruff, feral mid-tempo punk outta L.A. Apparently released as a demo a few years back, this has bits of raw, early oi, and some of the nastiest bits of late-'70s punk rolled in one, and it's not too difficult to imagine the singer stumbling around the stage while the rest of the band just hammers on their instruments. Dunno if they're still out there, but, given the quality here, it'd be a damned shame if they weren't. —Jimmy Alvarado (Mierda Mierda, mierdamierda.com)

BIZNAGA: *Gran Pantalla*: LP

The rousing chants of soccer fans thoroughly blended with driving and ethereal post-punk-influenced garage rock. That's a fucked up sentence but hopefully it conveys the essential message that: *this band is fuckin' great!* This new record shows an emphasis on adding relatively expansive texture to songs compared to the ripping, guitar punk ambush of their previous one, but it's still fantastic. Bands are allowed to grow; bands should be encouraged to grow! On *Gran Pantalla*, Biznaga prove that their voice is relevant and focused. It

doesn't matter if you spend your days and nights immersed in the sounds of garage punk, post-punk, or whatever Masshysteri would be considered, you'll find something you enjoy in this band. —Daryl (Slovenly)

BLOODSHOT BILL:

***Get Loose or Get Lost*: LP**

Even though this music was recorded in 2019, this sounds like it was made back in the 1950s. No fancy stereo tricks or layering of guitar or vocals. This sounds like it was recorded live in one take. However, it's all the work of one man, Bloodshot Bill, doing all the work and bringing it to you in its glorious raw form. Rockabilly done right, and done with integrity. Pretty damn good. —Matt Average (Goner, gonershop@gmail.com, goner-records.com)

BOBBY FUNK:

***Longing for the Bonging*: LP/CD**

When I first saw Bobby Funk live, I was impressed by the band's anarchic approach. Now a few years on, with a couple of single releases under its belt, *Longing for the Bonging* brings the anarchy to the long format. When listening to this band I always get the sense of a group which has quite a fresh take on punk rock and which really wants to have some fun. It's a raucous collection and it's hard to ignore songs like the garage punk weirdness of "I'm a Cat" or "Dunch," a song about Judi Dench and her extra

meal between lunch and dinner. The humor continues in "Breakfast Means Breakfast," a simple yet punchy ditty about the most important meal of the day, espousing the virtue of the traditional, and great, English breakfast. This is everything I could have asked for from the Cornish quartet. —Rich Cocksedge (TNS, info@tnsrecords.co.uk, tnsrecords.co.uk)

BOOTLICKER: *Live in the Swamp*: CS

This is a battle of pros and cons for me. Bootlicker is a hardcore punk band from Vancouver that I really enjoy and have praised in these very pages. That is the pro. The cons are I generally don't really like live albums very much, and I really don't like cassettes. Well, good thing for me, this sounds really great, doesn't fall prey to the usual shittiness of live recordings, and I can always just listen to it online. Sounds like I have made the decision. This is a winner! As always, they are tough, angry, and relentless. The folks at this show in Norfolk Va. got a hell of a show. I'm glad I have this. Neon Taste is always doing little things to make their releases that tiny bit cooler. In this case it is something as simple as the tape equivalent of an obi strip. Completely useless, but somehow perfectly necessary. Including the flyers for both the show and the tour was a nice touch too. —Ty Stranglehold (Neon Taste)

BRUISE CONTROL: *Self-titled*: CS

The opening riff of the first track, "Useless," immediately brought to mind Shang-a-lang. Although, as it progressed there, this band hailing from Manchester and Sheffield became definitely more hi-fi in sound than those New Mexican punks. Subsequent tracks display a proficiency in garage punk with vocals straining at times, which is not dissimilar to the aforementioned band. Definitely in the same ballpark and definitely worth checking out. —Rich Cocksedge (Rad Noise, radnoiserecords@gmail.com)

BULL CULT: *Demo*: LP

Hell fucking yeah. Ugly-as-fuck hardcore out of Illinois. Nods to the current crop of metallic beat down bands like Mindforce who funnel old school metallic straight edge hardcore through the filter of bands like Rival Mob or Spine. This is a "demo" recording, which makes it all the more chaotic and harsh sounding. Vocals are unhinged. Single sided, lasts about seven minutes, and is like getting your head beaten with a hammer. This is fast as fuck. Ugly as fuck. The beating is so bad they can only tell who you are by the fillings in your teeth. Glad shit like this still exists in my world. Top 10 business. SAVAGE. —Tim Brooks (Dropping Bombs, droppingbombs.bigcartel.com)

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CLOSE LOBSTERS: *Post Neo Anti Arte Povera in the Forest of Symbols*: CD

To my knowledge, this is the first release of new music in over thirty years for the jangle pop/C86/twee/indie pop legends from Glasgow. This is my favorite thing this amazing band has ever done because the production and singing are much better than on the older stuff and the songs are absolutely incredible, as always. If you're a fan of the style, Close Lobsters are likely already a favorite and if you are a fan of The Jesus And Mary Chain, early K Records and the like, you'll want to be all over this. Stunning and surprising return from one of the greatest pop bands of all time! —Mike Frame (Shelflife)

COLD FEET: *Punk Entity*: LP

Menacing hardcore punk from Baltimore that gives me the same warm feels as the first time I listened to bands like Koro, United Mutation, and Siege. Ugly and fast hardcore meant to annoy posers. "The songs are too short! What are they even saying?" This ain't Alkaline Trio, fuck you! Put these guys on a bill with Nosferatu and watch the venue burn down to the ground. —Juan Espinosa (Feel It, feelitrecordshop.com, cold-feet.bandcamp.com)

COMBAT and RULER:

The Loco-Motion: 7"

Fans of Japanese garage punk already worship both Combat and

Ruler, so this combination is going to cause a critical spike of excitement. It's not a split, but rather a two-song collaborative effort, with the two acts joining forces on both tracks. Fink of Teengenerate and Firestarter fame teams up with Combat for a female-fronted "Locomotion" cover on Side A. The flipside is a new original called "Action" that is mind-numbingly feisty. Only a small number of these records are available in the U.S. and Europe, with the bulk of them going to Japan. Find it while you can or pinch yourself. This record will be presumed imaginary in the very near future. —Art Ettinger (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

CORRIDOR PEOPLE: *Self-titled*: LP

Icy, tense synth-wave from a dude from Impo & The Tents and friends. Big-sounding, echoey production and some punk aggressiveness add some heft to songs that are already pretty strong. Me likey muchly. —Jimmy Alvarado (Push My Buttons, pushmybuttons.se)

COWBOYS, THE: *Room of Clowns*: LP

It took me a few spins of their last album, *The Bottom of a Rotten Flower*, before I actually had to wave the white flag and admit, yeah, okay, this really is a good band, you got me dead to rights. For the first two tracks here—sharp, quick rock with enjoyably shallow new wave trappings—I was overjoyed, thinking

I was witnessing the birth of the band's *Flush the Fashion*. However, by "The Beige Connection," shit started to go kinda sideways for me. I mean, the sticker on the shrink wrap describes the song as "Bowie seen through the lens of Suicide," but I thought it sounded more like the Psychedelic Furs seen through the lens of Tiny Tim. After that, things start sounding like a garage punk band trying to sound like any given song off of any given Kinks album within a few years either way of 1970—not a terrible goal or anything, but they got me all hyped up because I thought they were making their fake new wave album, then they detoured into all this loony Burt Bacharach-core stuff. It's the ol' bait-and-switch, I tell you! So, while I admire the band's ambitiousness, realize that this record could grow on me with repeated listenings, and grant that, given that this record spins at 45, they honestly don't have time to indulge themselves to the point that it's truly off-putting, I still feel like I came into it expecting the band's *Flush the Fashion* and came out feeling like I'd just been rolled by the band's *Sandinista!* Hey, where's the Equals cover? BEST SONG: "Clon Time." BEST SONG TITLE: "Martian Childcare." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: *Flush the Fashion* is my favorite Alice Cooper album. —Rev. Nørø (Feel It, feelitrecordshop.com)

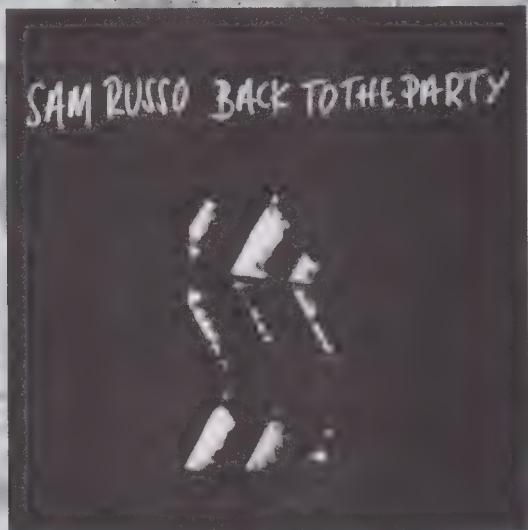
CRAVATS: *Hoorahland*: CD

Gotta love the true originals, man. Decades of bands striving to sound like one another, or whatever flavor of the month is in, but it's the ones that stick out that sore thumb and gleefully jam it in the eyes of all the others that leave the lasting impression. Forty-odd years, and several albums removed from their supposed "heyday" and the Cravats are still doing things their own way and kicking serious ass while doing so. Continuing along similar lines as their more recent albums, *Hoorahland* is a mix of Brecht-damaged punk and psychedelic nightmares, slathered heavily with wry wit, more World Inferno Friendship Society meets Phantom Limbs than, say, D.R.I.—a blissfully psychotic assault on the average punter's sensibilities, as it should be. Trend-hoppers will likely turn their noses up, but sonically adventurous should find just enough here to bend the noggin for a good while. —Jimmy Alvarado (Overground, overgroundrecords.co.uk)

CROCODILE GOD: *XIII*: CD/LP

Why didn't anyone tell me Dillinger Four moved to England, changed their name, got a new record label, and put out a new album? Seriously though, these guys have been around for decades and have consistently put out catchy pop punk. But the resemblance to the Minneapolis

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based *Razorcake* favorite is pretty uncanny to the point of begging me to wonder if Crocodile God allowed their influences to determine their sound far too much. —Kurt Morris (Crackle, cracklerecords.co.uk)

**CROISSANTS, THE:
Summer School Again: CD**

The title of this record could double as a title to my young education, just like D.R.I.'s *Five Year Plan*. This whole record is brat punk with lyrics that were probably written on desks, bathroom walls, and on the palm of their hands—discussed between classes and executed after skipping school. The songs have a definite formula they stick to, like Ramones songs, which seems like a fair comparison, as well as Angry Samoans, or newer bands like Surprise Vacation. Have a bitchin' summer. —Ryan Nichols (Brat Mag, info@bratmag.com)

CROISSANTS, THE: That's Tight! The Brat Collection 2010-2016: CD

Taking the title of The Dead Boys debut to heart, this trio from Sacramento hits all the right buttons on the jukebox. There are seventeen songs on this release that will burn into your brain like a red-hot scalpel. They're all originals minus one cover by Head. "Psychward" and "Don't Want to Live" are my favorites here and even the demos have their charm. Tight for sure, and a must-have for

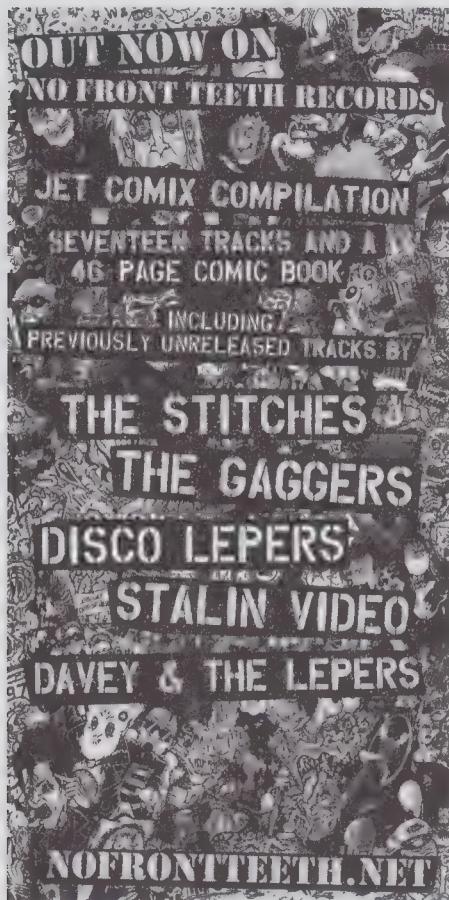
your collection. —Sean Koepenick (Brat Mag, info@bratmag.com)

CTMF: Brave Protector: LP

The king of lo-fi garage punk Billy Childish and his latest band of cohorts run through versions of songs he's done with previous bands and covers. The overall sound and performance hearken back to the glory days of The Headcoats and Mighty Caesars, and some of the covers, like The Who's "A Quick One" and Hendrix's "Fire," were a bit of a surprise. —Jimmy Alvarado (Burger)

**DAVE SMALLEY &
THE BANDOLEROS: Ignited: 7" EP**

If you didn't read the liner notes you would be hard pressed to tell that the vocals were recorded in Virginia and all the music was laid down in Spain. It does not negatively affect the music, in any event. Following up on their first full-length from 2018, this record features five hard-charging songs with an energetic mix from Bill Stevenson. Lyrical topics of standing up for yourself and staying true to your beliefs ring true, probably more right now than when this was first recorded. "Stabbed" is filled with piss and vinegar, but it is the title track that hits the hardest. "We are the boys/ who make too much noise—let's stay/ let's get it right." Mission accomplished. —Sean Koepenick (Little Rocket, Dsbandoleros@gmail.com)



DAYS N DAZE:

Show Me the Blueprints: CD

I can't say I was excited to get a folk punk CD to review. Don't get me wrong, I like folk punk like Billy Bragg, AJJ, and Roger Manning, stuff like that. It's just that folk punk got really, really bad over the years. Every band sounds like *MTV Unplugged* with annoying shouting and the growling up of lungs. Ugh! But I'll be damned if Days N Daze wasn't a pleasant surprise. First of all, they're all really adept musicians. All their songs have a few parts and make surprisingly good use of their instruments like banjos and washboards and accordions and jugs. While that annoying growling vocal style does

make an appearance, it's kept to a minimum and most of the songs are sung as if they take pride in their music. The lyrics are honest, personal takes on mental illness, self-medicating, and coping. Not by any means odd tropes for a folk punk band, but where most bands in the genre cover them like they're competing in a nihilistic, loser chic dick-measuring contest, Days N Daze sing of real feelings and struggles in a way that's relatable and sincere. Not really my thing, but not all that bad. I might go as far as to say I enjoyed it. By the way, what's a folk punk's favorite game? JENGA! JENGA! JENGA! Hah. Get it? Because that's what they

all sound like? Get it? Whatever. Will you get the hell out of here? —Craven Rock (Fat Wreck Chords)

DEAD CELLS: I: LP

Mix of gloomy death rock and punk stylings, resulting in a punchy mélange that is more sophisticated than most yet isn't smothering itself in its own navel. Closest comparison I can muster is a less-intense Criminal Code with a healthy dollop early Christian Death tossed in the cauldron. Easily one of the highlights for these ears this review cycle. —Jimmy Alvarado (Neon Taste)

DEAD GHOSTS:

Automatic Changer: CD

I have never heard of this band, but apparently they have a ton of fans. It is psychedelic garage rock with a twangy surf guitar tossed into the sound. These dudes are into peace (right on!) and drugs (a boatload of drugs!). The music reminds me a bit of The Doors with the instrumentation and The Thirteen Floor Elevators in the vocal department. Dammit, I just saw that I was supposed to listen to this in total darkness. Can I use a flashlight? —Sean Koepenick (Burger, deadghostsmusic@gmail.com)

DEAD HUNT: Self-titled: 12"

This is exactly what I expected from the artwork, which looks straight out of a Guillermo Del Toro movie—all blues and monstrous, a big moon

and some black wolves surrounding someone on a deformed horse amidst some kind of battle. Clean, metal guitars with concomitant shredding but with hardcore vocals. My most appreciated thing about this band is that the singer appears to be wearing a Rose City Antifa shirt in the photo on the back of the record and if they want to fight fascists this way, who am I to stop them? —Theresa W. (Black Water, blackwaterpdx.com)

DESTRIPADOS: Gutless: LP

Bleak, chaotic, blazing d-beat hardcore out of Portland, Ore. Despite treading familiar musical ground, this record boasts a swirling energy derived from the “psychotic screaming” vocals (as described by the label—a description that cannot be improved upon!) that keeps a chokehold on your attention. —Chad Williams (Black Water, blackwaterpdx.com)

DETROIT COBRAS, THE: Feel Good: 7"

I honestly had no idea that The Detroit Cobras were still around, and I’m really happy about it. The good news is they still do what they have always done great—garagey rock’n’roll with those indomitable vocals courtesy of Rachel Nagy. This is a single song 7” with a cool gold screen print on the flipside. The song is an Allen Toussaint cover that suits their style just fine. I’m sure glad this has found its way to

me. —Ty Stranglehold (Wild Honey, wildhoneyrecords.bandcamp.com)

DIFFICULT: Self-titled: CS

I love the art of this cassette; it captures a lot of what the early 2000s punk did well—simple yet smart, abrasive, affective. A red, scrawled snake eats its own tail encased in a few hand drawn black lines. The music follows the aesthetic suit of the art, embodying early 2000s punk meets riot grrrl—catchy, angsty, lo fi and tight. For fans of *Pussy Whipped*-era Bikini Kill and The Nerve Agents. —Candace Hansen (Nervous Intent)

DINGED UP: Mucho Dolor: LP

Geeky punk anthems from Maryland. Sometimes it sounds like Beat Happening covering The Misfits or early Devo doing a Cars impression—catchy and winning, while simultaneously stiff and messy. Remember that scene in *Wet Hot American Summer* where the kid who’s been pretending to be a robot all summer summons a wind storm at the camp talent show? This is what his band would sound like. This is a reissue of their 2016 album, and I bet there are some people out there who’ve had “All the Other Girls” stuck in their heads the whole time. —Chris Terry (Snappy Little Numbers)

D.O.A.: Treason: CD

After over forty years as a band, D.O.A. is back with what would

appear to be their nineteenth studio album. They’re still banging out the political punk fury and are nearly as good as they ever were. Topical and pissed-off, straight-up punk, something in short supply these days. If you haven’t checked in with them for a few years, this is a good place to start. —Mike Frame (Sudden Death)

DOMESTICS, THE / PIZZA TRAMP: Split: 12"

These two bands are renowned for a no nonsense delivery of short, thrashy hardcore tunes but this split sees a total change in approach with each providing a single track in excess of eleven minutes. This results in a more varied piece of work from each band, both shifting pace and mood across their respective sides of the vinyl. It’s good to hear something a bit different from this pair, as the songs allow for them to do much more than just thrash it out. The songs allow them to flex their creative muscles. A bold and successful move. —Rich Cocksedge (TNS, info@tnsrecords.co.uk, tnsrecords.co.uk)

DUMPIES, THE: Jim Thorpe: CS

Longest song clocks in at a whooping sixty seconds. I mean, they even cover a song that’s a minute and ten seconds long and manage to shave sixteen seconds off of it. What I’m trying to say is these people know what punk is about. Get in, get out, give the people what they want,

and move the fuck on. The music is melodic, structured, and well-played. They just don’t fuck around with playing the same parts over and over and over again. Which they don’t need to, ‘cause I can just listen to this tape four times in a row and each time it feels as refreshing as the last. —Daryl (Hovercraft)

EASY PREY: Relentless Struggle: 12"

Easy Prey’s debut release hit hard but this follow-up takes things a step or two further. For all intents and purposes, it sounds as if the band took to the studio with a desire to knock down all surrounding walls with whatever noise it could conjure. The recording has a sparse quality to it—resulting in some space between the component parts—and this is one of the improvements over its previous work. If anything, this is what has given Easy Prey more of a destructive sound. It’s sort of a cross between Shellac and Big Black but with a double helping of rage. I’d hate to see how the recording studio looks now. —Rich Cocksedge (1407, 1407records.com)

EXBATS, THE:

Kicks, Hits, and Fits: LP

Great little party record here. I can tend to be a bit judgmental when I see the Burger Records logo. I usually think of kids making music with little to no integrity. This band may be young but the songs are

super fun, with lots of catchy pop melodies complemented by a great female voice. There's sort of a doo-wop vibe going on that reminds me of *Jail Weddings* but also they take me back to the early days of The Dandy Warhols. The last song on here is called, "I Got the Hots for Charlie Watts" that title alone wins major points. —Ryan Nichols (Burger, burgerrecords@gmail.com)

FAUX REPLIKA: *Presenting! 12"*

Oh, shit yes. Roxy from The Epoxies and Chris from Doc Hopper, this record shreds. Fast, upbeat, joyful, and dark at the same time. A little lighter than White Lung, but a similar urgency and cleanliness. What I really appreciate is the range of the record. As someone who always prefers to listen to a record all the way through, I just can't get with albums that are the same song over and over with no overall cadence. This record runs the gamut without sacrificing personality, exploring all the nooks and crannies. Cringer meets Ex Hex. Love it. —Theresa W. (Rad Girlfriend)

FLESHIES / SHELLSHAG: *Split: 7"*

On this record Fleshies are dishing out their dystopian pop in full freak style. Ramshackle psychedelics swirling around the structure of a tetherball pole. East Bay punk crunch with energy that literally jumps on you like you're a human jungle gym and screams in your

ear. Sweat and spit interchangeably leaving a wet spot. Shellshag, purveyors of the most extreme intimacy, are coming with two noisy, fucked-fi sensory bludgeons. Drinking 40s with Suicide on the banks of the East River while staring at the midnight Manhattan skyline. Feels different than their usual fare, but absolutely perfect for this record! —Daryl (Dead Broke)

FLYTRAPS, THE: *Wild Card: CD/LP*

Wild and sleazy rock from Los Angeles. It looks like the band has now expanded to a four piece, but on this record they were still a trio. The songs are about partying, getting action, and doing things with whips. "Kitten with a Whip" and "I Wanna Party" put the rock in your face and keep it there. Raw punk that swings. Get some. —Sean Koepenick (Burger / Outro)

FORWARD: *Apathy Kills People: 7"*

Japanese hardcore legends, Forward, have been perfecting their sound since 1996 and it shows. There is this guitar part in the title track that is so good it hurts me. It just wails away in the background like it's nothing while the vocals grumble along. "Our World Our Own" hits so hard it's ridiculous. If you haven't listened to Forward yet, it is about time you give 'em a go. —Liz Jones (Black Water, blackwaterpdx@gmail.com, blackwaterpdx.com)

FREEZ: *Always Friends: LP*

Bunch of eighteen-year-old Italians, I guess. Decent, inoffensive garage/pop stuff, with some riffs that sound like they've been culled straaaaaaight from various "alternative" albums from the '90s. Certainly passable and fully-formed, just doesn't have much velocity or oomph to it. —Keith Rosson (Wild Honey)

FUTURE NOW PAST, A:

Self-titled: CD

Three piece from Georgia who have a sound rooted in classic rock. There is a Stones cover and "Fire in the Sky" has a definite Hendrix feel. When the band veers off this road is where it gets interesting. "I Know Where You Are" features a blues-based shuffle with some organ textures creating a cool vibe. "In the Red" bounces along and shows what the band can do. If you were ever wondering when is someone going to write a song about Alger Hiss, your prayers have been answered. —Sean Koepenick (Self-released, afuturenowpast.bandcamp.com)

GENOGEIST: *Self-titled: LP*

A few notes in and I was bracing myself for post-apocalyptic Tragedy ballad land. Not that there's anything wrong with that, really. However, I'm way more stoked on the rest of the record which is more of the crust, d-beat, death and thrash metal variety. I suppose one shouldn't expect anything but quality hardcore

from Portland, Ore. The drawing in the center of the insert says it all: a spiky-haired dis-rocker with his ears popping clean off his head. You don't need a shoestring headband or a jean vest with hundreds of studs to be down with this but if you already have one or both, then chances are you're going to dig Genogeist. —Juan Espinosa (Black Water, blackwaterpdx.com, genogeist.bandcamp.com)

GOHOL SQUAD: *Necrodoll: LP*

Readers Digest version of the backstory on this: Ghoul Squad was an obscure '80s band specializing in what is now pigeonholed as "horror punk" that released one song on one of *Thrasher* magazine's *Skate Rock* comps. This is a release of their full length, which was originally slated for release on noted punk artist Pushead's Pusmort label, but apparently never made it past a test press. Musically it sounds like an odd melding of proto-alternative rock, mid-period Hüsker Dü and, yes, Misfits, with some decent bursts of thrash peppered in here and there. It sounds like it was pulled from a cassette copy dub a few generations down, but is clear and sonically not a chore to slog through. —Jimmy Alvarado (Not Like You)

GLOBS, THE: *The Weird and Wonderful World of...: LP*

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Bananas made us feel better already, The Globs are here to deliver the answer to the ever-present conundrum: peace or annihilation? After all, it is our choice right? Well, from what I can decipher from Federico Parcheesi's fables, they have chosen peace. So ditch the sleepless nights and anxiety-ridden trips into the outside world; let Mike and the rest of the Globs warm your heart and put your mind at ease with their soothing poppy punk sounds and bouncy vocal gymnastics. I can see Sacramento now, shining on the horizon, Interstate 5 paved with yellow bricks; this new world is weirdly wonderful and wonderfully weird, and it belongs to The Globs. —Daryl (Recess / Dead Broke / Sac)

GO GO GO: *Go Golden*: CS

Are you looking for a Midwestern skate-thrash-violence hardcore punk cassette that opens up with a *Golden Girls* sound clip? If so, the search is over. Bloomington, Ind.'s Go Go Go arm themselves with bass, drums, and a seething contempt for age restriction shows. A lil' bit of DS-13, a lil' bit of Lack Of Interest, subtract a guitar, and you're in the right headspace. Major shout out to the bass player (you know him, you love him, it's *Rick V.*) for not only wearing shorts while he performs, but putting a picture of himself performing while wearing shorts in this release! Shorts are not a crime. —Daryl (Rhett

Skateboarding, itsmerickv@gmail.com, go-go-go.bandcamp.com)

GO GO GO: *Go Golden*: CS

Go Go Go is very fun fast skate punk with lyrics clearly written by punks who have spent one million hours at DIY shows. In other words, it is peak Rick V, if that means anything to you. This is the upbeat skateboarding or hand-stamping soundtrack you need right now. —Liz Jones (Rhett Skateboarding, itsmerickv@gmail.com, go-go-go.bandcamp.com)

GO!: *The Word is GO!: Demo 1989*: 7"

Classic NYHC from members of SFA. If you're into old school New York you probably already know you want this and love this. If you're not a fan already, it sounds exactly like every other early NYHC band: hard and fast with sincere and angry lyrics written by a teen. The lyric insert is actually my favorite part of this 7", a reproduced flyer and old photos accompany a letter describing the forming of the band along with some thank yous and an admission that some of the content doesn't hold up but also was formative. Nostalgic and honest. —Candace Hansen (No Mistake)

GREEN/BLUE: *Self-titled*: LP

This debut from Green/Blue from Minneapolis is a series of wraithlike, edgy pop songs with dual male/female vocals from Jim Blaha of The

Blind Shake and Annie Sparrows of The Soviettes. They're a supergroup all around, with Hideo Takahashi from Sweet J.A.P. on bass and Danny Henry of The Soviettes on drums. It's the kind of project that if not self-released, only a bold label like Slovenly would touch. Uncommercial in all respects, it's one of those moment-in-time exemplars of how punks are real, bona fide artists, capable of horizon-expanding creativity. It's a superlative record all around. —Art Ettinger (Slovenly)

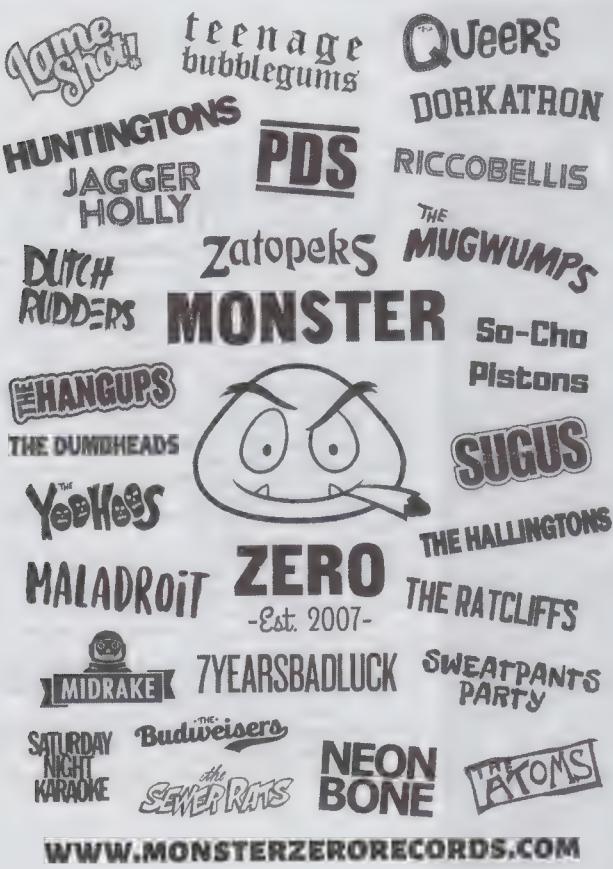
GUERRILLA POUBELLE: *L'Ennui*: CD

I'm writing this review while also watching a stack of four dumpsters burn in the street of Seattle in a live stream. If you need some music to help fuel this revolution in progress, *L'Ennui* is just that record. Released in late 2019, this album is chock full of songs about class war, social injustice, inequality, immigration, refugees, toxic masculinity, police repression, racism, and keeping the flames of discontent lit in the hearts of the people. And this band is from France. These lyrics are all in French, but they cover the struggles we are going through in America and the rest of the world. One thing I really appreciate about the booklet included with the CD (and I assume the LP) is that each song has a breakdown in English. Not a word-for-word English translation, but a paragraph explaining the meaning behind the

song. There's a line (which I used Google translation for) in the song "La Bataille de Paris" which says "the last of the rats protects his family, blinded by gas and defeat, confused between justice and bayonets." Fuck, how spot on is that right now and hopefully not forever? Musically they're gruff, guttural (how Till is able to scream these lyrics and play guitar at the same time is beyond me), heart-pounding, inspiring punk rock. I will say that the song "L'angle et la foudre" sounds an awful lot like an Arms Aloft song, which I'm totally okay with. Guerilla Poubelle walk a line between them and Propagandhi, which is perfect. And they even had room in this thirty minute record to include a ska breakdown! I think I'm going to learn a lot of French this year from Guerilla Poubelle. —Kayla Greet (Red Scare / Slam Disques)

HARSH R: *Tour EP*: CS

Harsh R are an electro darkwave industrial band from Olympia, Wash. This tour tape comes with three heavy bangers including songs about Satan and being a dog person. A remix of "Dog People" on the B side is sure to get all the leather pups to the dance floor. I wasn't expecting this from the package—the music on *Tour EP* sounds like a dungeon, but the tape art looks like some serious '80s dance pop—and I mean both of those things as compliments. —Candace Hansen (Self-released, harshr.bandcamp.com)



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HEAD: Heil Head: The Complete Discography 1992/1997: 2 x LP

One of the very earliest (and very best) purveyors of Ramonescore-and-nothing-but, this Seattle quartet ruled the first half of the '90s not only by righteous swiping of divine source material, but also largely on the strength of their sheer and admirable primitivism. These aren't people who felt that music began and ended with the first Ramones album, these are people who felt that music began and ended with the first Ramones *demo*. Songs like "I Can See What You Dig" (lyrics in their entirety: "Oh sweet lady give it to me brown style 'cause I can see what you dig") were the spiritual successors to pre-1976 taco tunes like "I Can't Be" and "I Don't Wanna Be Learned, I Don't Wanna Be Tamed," conferring a mightiness to them that other such outfits couldn't hope to touch. A group like the Riverdales might've occasionally tried to emulate Head's primitivism with minimalism, but minimalism is the result of well-planned, fully self-aware action; with primitivism you just kinda let it all hang out. What doomed Head in the long run was that their concept walked such a razor-thin line between sheer brilliance and utter stoopidity that they really had no place to go with it after a few years. By the time of their first true full-length, *The Monkeys* (get it?), they had musically progressed just enough to reach the point where they

suddenly stopped sounding raw and exciting, and began to sound like just another band who sounded like the Ramones. That said, this double album is an utterly indispensable artifact which you ignore at grave personal peril. **BEST SONG:** "Magic 8-Ball" or "Hypnotism." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Theme of Head." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** "Discography" misspelled on spine. —Rev. Nörb (Otis Premium Recordings, otispremiumrecordings.bandcamp.com)

**HONEY ROCKETS, LOS:
Asco en el Escenario: LP**

Wow, this is what it's all about right here. Punk rock from Mexico City sung in Spanish, with fuzzy strings and the right amount of keyboards. Like punk rock and Dada, this would go hand in hand with the Asco movement in East Los Angeles during the '70s, and not just because the title or the cover, but for its uniqueness. If you enjoy Lost Sounds, Generación Suicida, Goner Records, Killed By Death comps, or new wave, then support this band and go buy their record *ahora mismo!* —Ryan Nichols (Static Blooms, clint@staticbloomsrecords.com)

HOWARDIAN:

Are You a Frienda Brenda?: LP
Poignant, catchy, and driving. The music's kinda indie, kinda punk and the vocals are delivered in a

nasal croon. I'm hearing some early Jawbreaker in the mix with something like Silver Scooter. Every song is named after a place and the lyrics touch on travel and sadness, making this record feel like the downtime on tour—staring out the van window at blurry trees, waking up somewhere new with the same old hangover, but still glad to be out there in the world. —Chris Terry (Rad Girlfriend)

ILLYA: Microcosmos: LP

After ten years' worth of demos and EPs, this is the vinyl edition of the 2018 debut album from Japan's Illya. Raging hardcore with metallic overtones and a vocal delivery on the edge of sanity. If you're remotely interested in Japanese hardcore specifically—or dark, raw hardcore of any origin—check this out. Sidenote: excellent use of a lead from the bridge of Iron Maiden's "Fear of the Dark" to open track two! —Chad Williams (SPHC)

INDONESIAN JUNK: Spiderbites: LP

Punk and hard rock are a combination inherently fraught with peril. Anyone who lived through the '80s doubtless remembers watching their friends start the decade with crewcuts, Black Flag T-shirts, and combat boots and end the decade with poofy hair, bleach-splashed jeans, and cowboy boots. It was decidedly non-awesome. Bands who try to straddle the two camps tend to either a) focus

on the flawless execution of an idea that winds up sounding vaguely like what the Dead Boys might've sounded like if the Dead Boys couldn't write decent tunes; b) wallow in the ironic bloat of it all, ostensibly for laughs; or c) just kinda basically suck. What keeps Indonesian Junk out of this whole aforementioned useless morass is the fact that no matter how they advance in terms of playing ability or songcraft, they somehow always manage to come off as a hot mess of punk slobs. No matter what they do, they always sound like a bunch of thirteen-year-old boys jerking off over their Kiss and Thin Lizzy records at heart, which seals in the Rock Juice and keeps the whole friggin' *joie de vivre* of the thing intact. Sure, "Headbanger" is utterly moronic, and Dan always sings in this ridiculous blockhead rock *patois*, but what's that got to do with anything? *Let's dance!* There are also some outstanding journeys-by-guitar in songs like "City Lights" that are almost Tweezers-like in their power-poppiness and maybe coulda gotten on the radio like forty years ago. If this band was a box of Nerds®, one side would be Dork flavor and the other side would be Rock God flavor. Now that's good eating! **BEST SONG:** "City Lights." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Mean Christine." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Drummer is blocking the emergency exit. —Rev. Nörb ([Spiderbite, indonesianjunkrules.com](http://indonesianjunkrules.com))

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INFINITE PLASTIC INTERNAL / (BOYMOUTH: Split CS

Much like how your grandma gives no fucks about hip hop, or how a lot of your friends probably think all punk sounds like either Blink-182 or some grindcore band, I simply cannot muster the interest to delineate the supposed intricacies of noise albums. There are people who truly care about this stuff, and can write about it with some intelligence and nuance. I'm not one of those people. This is presumably a split release with two artists, and yet they both just... make fucking noise. It's like listening to a very dull stranger talk about their dreams, but using the sound of a shopping cart on gravel and a dial-up modem instead of a human voice. Like I said, other people are interested in this stuff, and truly enjoy it. To me, it's an affront to my very limited time, and just annoying as shit. There are other periodicals—or at least other reviewers—better suited for this sort of thing. —Keith Rosson (Rotten Princes)

ISOTOPE SOAP:

An Artifact of Insects: LP

This is some weirdo Devo shit from Sweden. Definitely fun to have on in the background, but for me it's not much more than electronic noise. Some of the lyrics are pretty solid. The jangled, despondent guitar is fucking cool, but then the synth and robot voices pop in and I'm out. It's

possible that I'm just on edge an awful lot lately and this kind of synth music with distortion tends to give me anxiety if I'm not in the mood for it. Might have to check back in on it another time when there's not flash bangs popping off and helicopters circling overhead, but cheers to y'all for doin' your thing. —Kayla Greet (Push My Buttons)

JASMINE DREAME WAGNER:

Switchblade Moon: EP

I first knew Jasmine as a writer—she and I were on the same reading bill at Quimby's in Brooklyn last summer. On this vinyl EP, she creates lush soundscapes with evocative vocals and multi-instrumental arrangements that remind me of the Rachel's at their chamber best. The sort of atmospheric stuff that I can imagine myself writing to, or, alternately, getting lost in. —Michael T. Fournier (Self-released, jasminedreamewagner.bandcamp.com)

KURÔISHI: *Sound the Alarm: LP*

Darkened d-beat, crust, and hardcore punk from Finland. Thunderous drums, heavier-than-barrels-of-napalm guitars, and unholy vocal growling that would make the undead crawl back into their graves. If you can't seem to get enough of heavyweights such as Tragedy or Morne then look no further, you've found your new favorite band. —Juan Espinosa (SPHC, sphrcards.bandcamp.com)

LAFFING GAS:

It's a Beautiful Day in the Gulch: LP

Chaotic, stop-start hardcore punk from Bloomington, Ind. channeling everything from *Pick Your King* to AmdePetersen's Armé. Unfortunately the paper-thin sound quality doesn't lend itself much to vinyl. This is one of those releases that I would enjoy infinite times better on a tape or with better production and that's something I rarely find myself saying. —Juan Espinosa (Beach Impediment, beachimpedimentrecords.bandcamp.com / turdwurl.bandcamp.com)

LAUNCHER: *Bone Saw: LP*

Mid tempo punk with a slightly bent edge. They sound as though they were raised on a steady diet of Alternative Tentacles records beyond the Dead Kennedys. There's some mildly interesting aspects to their sound, but this collection of songs sounds more like a demo, as nothing on here really clicks to make me want to listen to this more than once. —Matt Average (Wanda, wandarecords.de)

LESS MISERABLE:

Insufficient Funds: LP

Right off the bat I like their song titles a lot: "Horses Held," "It Costs a Lot to Be This Cursed," and "Functional Embarrassment." Oh man, this is like a mix of American Steel, Spraynard, and Direct Hit? Definitely the American Steel comparison is apt. The scream/singing is on par with

the best of Rory and Ryan's melodic singalongs. The rest of this musical cocktail is sharp guitar leads that make me think of Dan Vapid and Jughead—well mixed background vocals that are laid back in the cut, some shredding rhythm guitar, and loose, but not sloppy, drumming. Yeah, I like this a lot. Even when it dips its toes firmly into ska for a few songs, they're belting out lines with as much feeling as Iron Chic. Well done, dudes. —Kayla Greet (Rhodehouse)

LÍE: *You Want It Real: LP*

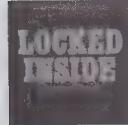
Pronounced "lee-ey," Vancouver's post-punk powerhouse trio comes in hot with their fourth LP. Tense and angular, swirling and discordant—yet driving with a solid rhythmic rumble throughout. Hard female vocals you don't wanna fuck with, attacking rape culture and patriarchy. There's a ruthless aggression to the sound with everything pushed to eleven, harking back to the "Don't fuck with me" attitude of bands like Bikini Kill, but with the riffs and chops of early Gang Of Four. This is hard as fuck. —Tim Brooks (Mint)

LITHICS: *Tower of Age: LP*

I loved *Mating Surfaces*, the Lithics album prior to this one, but what really did it for me was seeing these cats live: watching the four-piece play compositions which might otherwise fall prey to all sorts of rock clichés (jagged, skittery, angular,

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skronky) was a revelation because each member of the band stood in front of a largely indifferent crowd and banged out their parts *without looking at each other*. Everyone in this band is a kickass musician, despite the seeming simplicity of their parts, and that intentionality helps put the project into perspective. On *Tower of Age*, Lithics push their sonic deconstruction even further. The rhythm section locks into gear at odd intervals as dueling guitars flutter, scrape and/or sting. These songs engulf you with magnets and dare you to find the compass bearing to dance (which you inevitably will, on the first or fifth or tenth listen). The soundtrack to my summer for sure. —Michael T. Fournier (Trouble In Mind, troubleinmindrecs.com)

LITTERBUG: *Abstract Melodies Saying Terrible Things*: LP/CD

Litterbug holds no surprises, really. The band offers up punk rock which is melodic, angry, and eminently catchy. Although it might not be a band that changes the face of punk rock or sells millions of records, the trio does what it does extremely well. I always find that listening to Litterbug puts me in a good mood. I love the crisp guitar sound and the songs are easy to immerse myself in. So, no surprises, no reinventing of the wheel, just a cracking good time to be had listening to this. —Rich Cocksedge (JSNTGM, andy@jsntgm.com, jsntgm.com)



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**LIVING RIGORMORTIS:
Medusa and the Kiss: 7"**

Was expecting some kinda dark hardcore based on the cover art, so it was a bit of a surprise when straight ahead rock came outta the speakers. It ain't bad—two mid-tempo tunes with a bit o' punk-savvy playin' in there somewhere—just not really my ball o' yarn. —Jimmy Alvarado (National Dust, nationaldust.bigcartel.com)

**LONGMONT POTION CASTLE: *Where in the Hell Is the Lavender House?*
Soundtrack: LP**

I was talking with a fellow Razorcake contributor about what records we each got for review and they helped shed some light on this one. It's not anything I'd ever heard of before, but instantly they were like, "Oh the prank caller? Awesome!" So now at least I was going into this listening session with a little bit of background, even though the fact it was labeled as a soundtrack was still throwing me for a loop. I'll level with you, I do not like this. Maybe I have a shitty sense of humor, but this was mostly just stressful to listen to. He prank calls multiple people at a time and it becomes so confusing and annoying—for the unsuspecting victims and me. In between pranks there's some heavy black metal playing with growling vocals. Much more tolerable to hear. The calls are made to random

people across the country wherein LPC asks nonsense questions like, ordering bits and blobs from a guy in London who doesn't own a business, or getting two sheets of drywall into his buggy from a total stranger who doesn't sell drywall. It's bizarre and often times very hard to hear/listen to. I guess I relate more to the frustrations of the people being pranked than the harmless fun this person is having. Anyways, this apparently is a soundtrack to a documentary someone may or may not have made. —Kayla Greet (Burger)

LOVE TRAP: *Rosie*: LP

An exercise in dark moodiness with lots of interesting bits—Kinksian dancehall, mid-Velvets frail psychedelia, bluesy soul, plunkly lo-fi garage pop—showing in the influences. There's not a lot of sunlight shining through here, but it's not all oppressive darkness so much as varying shades of melancholy gray. Good listen for those times when you're just not feeling all warm and fuzzy. —Jimmy Alvarado (Wild Honey, facebook.com/wildhoneyrecords)

LOW RATS: *"The Corner"/"Weird Tales of Falling Down"*: 7"

It says this is a limited twenty-piece hand-cut 7", so good fucking luck. Minneapolis sleaze—the bastard sons of Iggy and the MC5 but with some of the real Detroit dirt à la Timmy's

Organism or the Clone Defects. You know the deal; scuzzy dudes doing junk in the bathroom then burning the dance floor with snot snarl and an organ player that is barely hanging on. Shit ain't pretty but it smokes. —Tim Brooks (A&A)

MAMMALS:

"The Hours" b/w "Tracks": 7"

I guess surf is kind of back. I dig the super-simple black and white aesthetic of the band, which definitely harkens to some past era that the music is also vaguely gesturing to. "The Hours" has a much more Beach Boys vibe than "Tracks," which brings in a little bit more '70s vibe that reminds me of The Knack or Nick Lowe but also with a country twist like a more pop-y Elliott Brood. I would call these radio-friendly and I love that for them. —Theresa W. (Lamont, mammals.bandcamp.com)

MAMMALS: *Look Around You*: 7"

I don't think I could ever profess to be an expert when it comes to pop music and its many varieties. I do know that I am, in most cases, a fan. Mammals play good pop music. It hooks you in and takes you along for the ride. I am reminded of my favorite hometown pop legends Bum at times. There's a definite '90s indie feel to this (and I do not say that as a slight). I think I love this record. I am off to find more! —Ty

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Stranglehold (Lamont, mammals.
bandcamp.com)

MAMMALS: *This Sound: 7"*

Chicago's power pop garage trio, Mammals, is on the mellower end of the power pop spectrum. I kept waiting for the part of the song that hit me in the heart, but it never came. The build-up is there, but it never quite broke. I feel like they are holding back, and I really want them to let loose. It's like dancing with someone who hasn't learned to use their hips yet. -Liz Jones (Lamont, mammalsband.com)

MEATBOT: *Live at Fort Reno: CD*

Normally I'd feel robbed if I got three songs on a CD, but here it's a blessing. Meatbot annoys me right off the bat with "MEATBOT Dawn," a bland hardcore song where the song title is repeated over and over as the only lyrics. It only goes downhill from there when we're treated to profound lyrics like, "left wing/right wing/ it don't really mean a thing" sung in with a forced apathetic delivery over '80s hardcore riffs. -Craven Rock (meatbot.band@gmail.com, meatbot.us)

MECHANICAL CANINE:

Good Photography: LP

Alternative rock/pop with a Midwest twang to it and hints of the Kinks' more hippie-dippy inclinations mixed in. There's

enough dissonance and creativity in it to keep it from sounding like prefab major label radio fodder, which is definitely a blessing. -Jimmy Alvarado (Fire Hazard, firehazardrecords.com)

MESA LANES:

Red Wine & Yellow Pills: LP

Dodge Dart was one of the first bands I fell in love with due to reviewing their record, way back in my first year at *Punk Planet* in 1999. Hailing from Costa Mesa, they blew me away with their hilarious, vibrant take on pop punk. Years later, they returned with a second album in 2014, another instant classic with several songs that became staples in my daily playlists. Subsequently finalizing a new lineup, they changed their name to Mesa Lanes and released a fabulous full-length in 2017. Mesa

Lanes is back with this new release, comprised solely of re-recorded Dodge Dart songs, updated by the kick-ass current lineup. Some of these songs date way back to the 1990s and they're more than worthy of contemporary updates. It's available in at least five distinct versions on vinyl, as well as on CD. I dream of a day where the world appreciates this band's brilliance as much as I do. One of the finest albums of 2020; anyone into catchy pop punk will adore *Red Wine & Yellow Pills*. —Art Ettinger (*Hostage*)

MATHEMATICS: Self-titled: LP

MethMatics are from Columbus and play early Dead Boys-inspired '77 punk. There were a lot of bands trying to emulate that sound in the 1990s, but it ended up feeling like a bit of a fad. There aren't as many groups playing this style these days, and it's oddly refreshing to check out a new slab of vinyl from a pack of purists. There's a bar band vibe inherent with these tropes, but MethMatics seem to be having enough fun with it that it doesn't feel too manufactured. They're also keen on playing with fabulous early punk notions of gender fluidity as proudly part of a scene that has always been ahead of the curve, at least on paper. Reminiscent of Detroit's Trash Brats, in all of the best ways. MethMatics rule! —An Ettinger (Self-released, methmatics.bandcamp.com)

**MISSING PAGES: "Long Way Down"
b/w "Highlighter Piss": 7"**

It's been a long time since I've written. This 7" feels how it feels to be alive on day sixty-something of quarantining in Los Angeles in my sunlit apartment, staring into an alley that used to be filled with skateboarding teenagers screaming "Fuck," tumbling on pavement that used to be filled with working men and is now filled with lonely clean air and overgrown bushes juxtaposed against rubber glove

on the ground like weeds. I'm listening to the A side, "Long Way Down," looking over the shoulder of a rubber tree growing toward the light, pushing blinds to the side like a familiar foe. I remember the feeling of the sun on my skin. "How it feels to be underneath... I knew you then, a warming light" repeats. The feeling of Missing Pages—the feeling of remembering sun on our skin and knowing it will be there again—bright, full, somber, hopeful. Beautiful. —Candace Hansen (12XU)

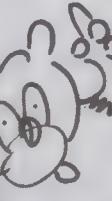
MOON BANDITS:

Danger. Ruckus. Riot.: LP

Tommy and Astrid make folk punk albums the way some people scrapbook or update their social media pages. Each full length release is a way to catch up with what the two of them have been reading and thinking about, protesting, and adventures shared as they build a home and raise children together. Moon Bandits have once again teamed up with producer Paul Roessler (who was a member of The Screamers and 45 Grave) and this time added guitar and piano, which round out their sound nicely. In my opinion, too many folk punk bands sound like they are sour about not being able to plug in, so they awkwardly beat their riffs onto a banjo. *Danger Ruckus*. Riot, moves Moon Bandits

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solidly away from that. The songs and themes are still punk but they take the folk part of the equation seriously, crashing the two genres into one another to create something really special. There are so many good songs here, some political, some personal, but all heartfelt. Like other Moon Bandits releases, this one comes with a well-crafted zine full of art, photographs, lyrics, and explanations of the songs. The tune that gets stuck in my head is "Emergency Hearts," which Tommy describes as a "love ballad for our fellow anarchists." It is a wonderful and poignant song as the country literally burns for justice. But the moment on the album that punched me in the gut comes in the song "Silent Moments." Tommy and Astrid sing about their relationship together, "When things around us are tough/ We look at each other and we shut the fuck up/ Sometimes silent moments are all we can conjure." As these two artists join in art and uprisings, life and shared work, they take time to talk about the realities in their relationship and it makes me feel seen for all the things I try and juggle in my own life. Art creating solidarity. And it is refreshing to hear someone, especially someone with passionate beliefs, admit that they don't have all the answers. —Jon Mule (Self-released, moonbandits.bandcamp.com)

MORON'S MORONS: *Looking for Danger: LP*

Debut album from this Warsaw quartet. Hardcore punk, pop punk, garage rock'n'roll, and old school, snotty late-'70s KBD punk, all thrown in a giant Polish melting pot. The resulting slab of pure punk is surprisingly cohesive and addictive. The more you listen, the more you need to consume. Thankfully for us Westerners, everything is sung in English, yielding maximum appreciation of the demented lyrics. Puxn! —Chad Williams (Slovenly)

MR. CHI PIG:

"Hurt" b/w "Painful Reminder": 7"
I have never hid my love for the legendary Edmonton/Vancouver band SNFU. They were incredibly influential on me at a young age and continue to be today. Ken Chinn (aka Mr. Chi Pig) and I have been friends for the better part of thirty years. I don't get to see him or talk to him often, but I am always thinking about him and worrying about his well being. Imagine my surprise when this record came onto my radar. A few of his friends in Vancouver helped him to put out this two-song single and it really is a thing of magical proportions. First and foremost, this is not the flying through the air Chi Pig of days gone past. He is older now and has lived particularly hard. The music here

is simple accompaniment of piano, cello, violin, and guitar and result is haunting. The A-side is a cover of Nine Inch Nails' "Hurt" (a song that Chi has been making his own at punk rock karaoke in Vancouver for ages) and the flip is a reworking of the SNFU classic "Painful Reminder." I cry when I listen to this record. I am thankful that he has friends out there doing their best to help him continue to create art. There aren't very many of these out there, but I highly recommend getting a copy if you can. Hail to the Pig! —Ty Stranglehold (Golden Age Collectibles)

MUFFS, THE: *Whoop Dee Doo: LP*

The Muffs were definitely something special. From their first singles on, they deftly fused jangly '60s-influenced pop to a punk chassis that would've made Motörhead proud, and gleefully playing with seeming opposites worked well in Kim's songwriting and the band's performances as well—biting yet sensitive, gruff yet accessible, playful yet serious as a heart attack in delivery. This reissue of their 2014, and second-to-last, album saw them roar back after a decade break between it and its predecessor, *Really Really Happy*, with easily one of their best albums. Crunching guitars, a pummeling rhythm section, and hooks drenched in Merseybeat

influences, the songs are by turns funny and aching, feral and touching, and ultimately so goddamned good one can't help but ask why every one of them isn't a radio staple. Seriously, how great would it be if some seditious DJ slipped in "Cheezy," with its cheery chorus of "And I really liked you/ 'til I got to know you/ Don't you know, can't you see that it means nothing to me?/ Because you're cheesier than you know," after the umpteenth play of the Beatles' "I Should've Known Better," its sonic doppelgänger? Ah, well, woulda, coulda, shoulda, fuck it. Our world was a better place because we had The Muffs all to ourselves and the music industry will forever be that much lamer for never truly appreciating just how special they were. —Jimmy Alvarado (Burger)

MURO: *Pacifcar: LP*

This Bogota band's *Ataque Hardcore Punk* album was a doozy and this one easily follows suit. Sonically they fall between early Chaos U.K. and Disorder, with some more homegrown influences. Results are deceptively loose, zippy, and unrelenting. Eleven tracks of choice hardcore Colombiano, start to finish. —Jimmy Alvarado (Beach Impediment, beachimpedimentrecords.bigcartel.com)



NAG: Dead Deer: LP

Panicked, doomed punk bashing: two parts *Blood Visions*-era Jay Reatard and one part anthemic early-'80s California punk. Thirteen songs from this Atlanta band, only one of which cracks two minutes. If giant cockroaches with laser eyes were burning down my city, I'd throw this on before grabbing my bug-out bag and busting out. —Chris Terry (Die Slaughterhaus, dieslaughterhausrecords.com)

NAG: Dead Deer: LP

Short and sweet synthpunk LP—with only one song cracking the two-minute mark—chock full of what sounds a lot like a less buoyant Servotron. Robotic and chunky, there's a certain charm, through the slower tempo songs tend to drag. Not at all what I'd expect from an album cover chock full of entropy and organic matter, i.e., a collage that does indeed seem to feature a dead deer. —Keith Rosson (Die Slaughterhaus, dieslaughterhausrecords.com)

NEUTRALS:**"Rent"/"Your House": EP**

You know those times when you find a record and discover a vein of untapped back catalogue? Neutrals was one of those bands for me. The pedigree of the dudes in this band led me backwards through groups

whose names I'd heard, but never dug into, like Giant Haystacks, Airfix Kits, and Magic Bullets. All this digging was a welcome distraction from the beginning of quarantine back in March when this slab arrived. With all that said, the back story wouldn't be worth mentioning if the present-day stuff wasn't good. And reader, I'm here to tell you that the Neutrals fucking *slay*. Propulsive rhythms drive, leaving ample space for liberal but spacious application of trebly—dare I say D. Boon-esque—guitar and Allan McNaughton's brogue, yielding compositions that sound to these ears like the joyous first spate of post-punk records. All this, plus the neat and unexpected trick of making a cover of the Exploited's "Hitler's in the Charts Again" sound like the Feelies' "The Boy with the Perpetual Nervousness." Neutrals are my new favorite band. If any of this sounds even vaguely appealing, they'll be yours, too. —Michael T. Fournier (Domestic Departure, domesticdeparturerecords.com)

NIGHT SLAVES: Three and a Half: LP

Sleazy, sinister garage rock with hips that aren't scared to move. This Buffalo band is drinking from the same well as Spiritualized, Verbena, and Murder City Devils and the results go down easier than your third well shot. Guessing it's a B-Movie reference, but I

am tired of white bands putting the word Slave in their names. Shit's got bad connotations! —Chris Terry (Swimming Faith, swimmingfaithrecords.com)

NIGHT SLAVES:**Three and a Half: LP**

This album contains a reasonable assemblage of '60s riffs forged with '90s production tropes. "Absolute" contains a bouncy keyboard riff similar to a famous ? And The Mysterians song coupled with mid-tempo, echo-laden tambourine keeping pace. "Midnight" lessens the pace a bit with a slow guitar strum and Oasis-style drama in the vocal intervals. Most of the songs travel with a mid-paced groove. Nothing on the album jumped out at me: it evokes the higher-end offerings of '90s alternative radio. —Billups Allen (Self-released, nightslaves.bandcamp.com)

NUBLES, LAS / PALOMINO BLOND:**Split: 12" EP**

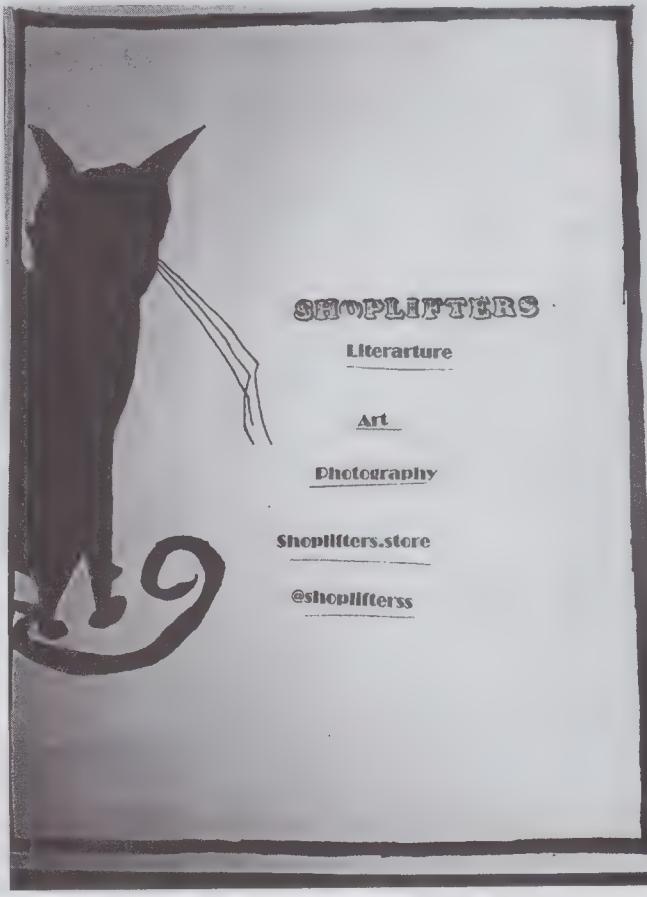
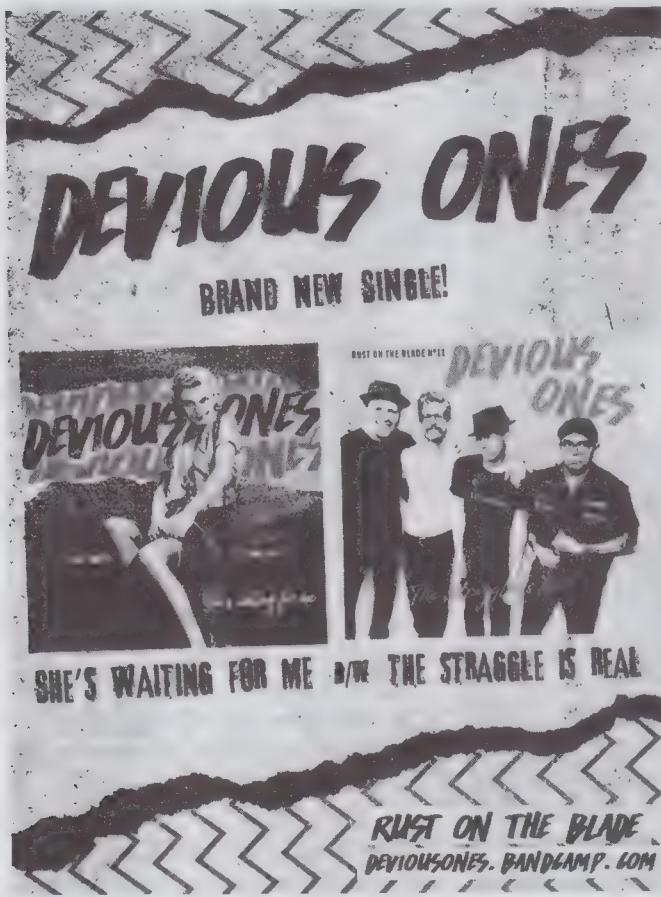
Las Nubes: catchy, grungy pop—slower tempos, mellow vocals, and loud guitars. Palomino Blond: loud pop, a bit more aggressive in delivery and with some dissonance mixed in for "edge." Both bands are quite good at what they're doin' and deliver two tracks each with conviction. —Jimmy Alvarado (BUFU, bufu-records.com)

ON THE MIGHT OF PRINCES:**Where You Are and Where You Want to Be: LP**

Originally released in 2002 on Creep/Traffic Violation, this one's getting the reissue treatment. This kind of post-hardcore/emo stuff was super popular at the time, and these guys did it really well. Dual screamed vocals and light, twinkling guitar lines that build up into lurching rhythms and then those loud, soaring crescendos, everyone just going off. I mean, it's emotional stuff, right? *Where You Are...* is probably considered by a lot of folks to be one of the cornerstones of the genre, and OG versions of this album go for quite a bit, so fans will be stoked to get their mitts on this. —Keith Rosson (Dead Broke, deadbrokerecords.com)

OOZELLES: Self-titled: LP

This is a slinky record with a lot of unusual turns. The album begins with "Secret Door," a song with an aggressive groove driven by drums and congas accented by punches of avant-garde saxophone. The second song, "Fangs," is my favorite. It's an upbeat "begin your summer evening" jumper with a solid keyboard melody framing a bit of punk Prince bravado. The album finds a similar jump-step with the bass holding down the melody at the source of "Can't Get Out." Overall, the album resurrects



a few '80s party guitar sounds generally adorned with multicultural grooves, a nice variety of instrumentation, and an occasional avant-garde sax riff lurking in the shadows. A few nice soundscapes are evoked along the way as well. It doesn't always hit with me, but it's a very creative band. I hope they are favorites at sweaty house shows. —Billups Allen (Org Music)

PART TIME LOVER: "Kelly Cruise Kelly" b/w "Shee-Ra": 7"

Really great lo-fi indie pop from Cleveland, Ohio that embodies the sound of driving through windy and woodsy highways of the Midwest. Cool and spacey, a little '60s, with creative drums and harmonies. What really makes this 7" are the superstar keys and synth moments that feel a little ELO and a little Ray Manzarek playing with X. —Candace Hansen (Just Because)

PAVID VERMIN:

Throw Me in the Trash: CD

Pavid Vermin is the project of Rhode Island resident, Glenn Robinson. These eleven songs are really fun power pop with occasional surf influences. It's kind of like if the Ramones met a surf punk band met one of those Ramones rip-off bands like The Huntingtons or Screeching Weasel. This is enjoyable stuff that'll surely get your toes tapping. —Kurt Morris (Bloated Kat)

PEAWEES, THE: Walking the Walk: LP

This record is from 2007 and I can't tell if it's a repress or what, but it's come across my desk for review here thirteen years later. It's a jaunty rock'n'roll record from a four piece out of Italy. There are some particularly bluesy leads throughout, but mostly they're leaning on big, chunky guitar riffs that are super powerful. The drums are forefront in the mix and really drive home this kinetic noise that really riles me up. But it's the vocals I'm truly in love with. Their singer has a deep and raspy voice that is somewhat like a loud whisper. It just punches through every song and is carried along with those huge, melodic chords from the guitars. "Cloudy Vision" is a hell of a song. It's got a fast beat while the singer draws out guttural grit over and over again. Really enjoyed that track and the album as a whole. —Kayla Greet (Wild Honey)

PHONE JERKS, THE: 10x10: 10"

I feel like I've said everything I have say about this record before about other records. It's pretty generic and I found myself singing "Lump" over one of the intros, which isn't a bad thing because I used to love The Presidents Of The United States of America and it's been a while. —Theresa W. (Alien Snatch)

PIFCO, EL: Meltdown: 7"

A reissue of an Australian band's sole single on the fortieth anniversary of its release. The title track, written in the wake of the Three Mile Island nuclear disaster, is a smart aleck love song comprised of an extended series of nuclear references and metaphors set to a mellow tune that all but screamed for inclusion in a Dr. Demento playlist. The flip, "Bananas," is a love song along the same lines, with the titular fruit serving as replacement metaphor set to a bouncy quasi-Caribbean rhythm that recalls the Modern Lovers. —Jimmy Alvarado (Metallic Rainforest)

PINK LINCOLNS:

Suck and Bloat: LP

The great thing about somehow being ignorant of a classic band for thirty years is getting that singular feeling that you're hearing something classic for the first time. It's an instant, "Oh, fuck yes" sort of feeling, much like that first beer after a long, hard day of physical labor. Just before this record (a reissue of Pink Lincolns' third album from 1994) arrived on my doorstep, I had finally checked out their 1989 debut album and felt rightly stupid for having missed them, but got that aforementioned feeling, one I had often in the '90s

when first discovering any of our genre's classic bands. This album is a snotty, catchy, raw punk rock classic. Go get it now, on gorgeous hot pink vinyl! Oh, and Iggy Pop is responsible for the cover art, as if this needed any more cred. —Chad Williams (Rad Girlfriend, radgirlfriendrecords.com)

PISSIN' COMETS: Up for Stealing / Meant for Healing: CS

When I heard Tenement's *Napalm Dream*, the first thing that popped into my head was, "Wow! They accomplished what Period Three was trying to do." That being said, I listen to my Period Three CD-R significantly more than *Napalm Dream*, even though I consider it a modern masterpiece! There's just a magnetic pull to those songs in their brutal, transparent nature. This Pissin' Comets tape has the same quality—an almost identical sense of scrappy, half-drunk self-theory. Barbaric introspection and a desire to watch the city burn from your bedroom window. If Stun Guns brought the keg and Frozen Teens tapped it, Pissin' Comets are who I want to be seeing play while I drink my beer. —Daryl (Self-released)

PLEDGE DRIVE:

Second Impressions: CS

My inherent tendency to discount anything released on cassette simply by virtue of its having been released



on cassette was thwarted by these six songs from this Chicago six-piece. So much for my boundless integrity! They kinda sound like what would happen if four-fifths of X-Ray Spex joined forces with two-fifths of the Mekons (when the Mekons were still somewhat normal), but with Roxy Epoxy singing instead of Poly Styrene—i.e., like a cross between second wave 1978 punk and first wave 1979 post-punk, but from Chicago. And, unlike other leading sextets with saxophone and keyboard players (admittedly I can only think of the Psychedelic Furs right at this second but that example should suffice), I wouldn't imagine that they are under the impression that they are scrawling darkly inspirational blank verse across the filthy dinge of urban existence; they seem more like they are out to basically amuse themselves, which certainly works for me. I was particularly amused by "Pyramid Scheme," as the guy who had the locker next to me in high school is a total right-wing nut job and also an Herbalife millionaire. I don't have his money but I do have this song, so I'm calling it even and I thank the band for having my back. More please! BEST SONG: "Pyramid Scheme." BEST SONG TITLE: Either "I Get My Protein" or "I Googled Your Boyfriend." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "I Googled Your Boyfriend" and "Identity Theft"

are transposed in the track listings. —Rev. Nörb (What's For Breakfast, wfbrecords.com)

PLEROMA: *Vitriol: LP*

Grandiose post-punk from Sweden for the Sacred Bones Records crowd. —Juan Espinosa (The Dustward / Push My Buttons, dustworld.bandcamp.com, pushmybuttons.se,)

PRIMITIVE TEETH: *Self-titled: 7"*

This is Primitive Teeth's second self-titled EP. This Chicago trio plays Slant 6-ish goth punk with plenty of drive and none of the wallowing that usually comes with the genre. Singer/bassist Christine Wolf has a cool, haunting voice that cruises over the music and, hey, I'm gonna cruise over to the record player and play this again. Good shit. Members of Daylight Robbery, Violent End, Split Feet, and Chronic Seizure. —Chris Terry (Dirt Cult)

PRISONER: *Self-titled: 7"*

I put this record on blind and was instantly taken by familiarity. It took me a few minutes to wrap my head around it; then I realized that Prisoner is a Brandon Hamilton (Dude Jams, Shit Creek, Prince, et cetera, et cetera.) joint. It all came together for me with the incredibly catchy, enjoyable songs with agonizingly sad lyrics. This record absolutely rules. I know it probably says something about my goal-setting skills, but I

have had a long-time aspiration to eat pizza and/or burritos with Brandon and shoot the shit about whatever. Someday! —Ty Stranglehold (Rad Girlfriend, radgirlfriendrecords.bandcamp.com)

PRIVATE FUNCTION:

Live on PBS 106.7FM: CS

Private Function's 2019 album, *St. Anger*, is a solid favorite of mine, so the news of a live radio release coming out had me quite excited. The Australian band now includes Pete Russo from Night Birds in its ranks, doubling up the guitar quota which boosts the band's sound nicely and is notable on this excellent recording. For a band with a chaotic reputation, this performance kicks off in that style with a false start before resetting and letting rip for thirty minutes. This is an excellent release and I really hope Private Function makes it to the U.K. one day. —Rich Cocksedge (Disdain, disdainrecordsmelbourne@gmail.com, disdainrecords.bigcartel.com)

PROGRAM:

Dehumanized Progress: LP

Bone crushing d-beat and hardcore from southern Texas. Anti-authoritarian lyrics backed by punishing hardcore that tips the cap to Scandinavian legends such as Totalitar and Anti Cimex but with a southern Texas flavor all its own. Can you hear the sound of an enormous door slamming in the depths of hell?

That's Program fucking shit up in the RGV, baby. —Juan Espinosa (Border Mangel / Mutant Sounds, programtx.bandcamp.com)

PSYCHIC VOID:

Skeleton Paradise: 10"

On their bandcamp page, Psychic Void says "If there was a word in the English language that combined happiness with anger, it would perfectly describe this record," and I've sat here listening to this thing trying to come up with a useful word to fill that gap. I think they're trying to capture that feeling when you aren't sure whether you're super anxious or super excited, like you can't tell whether you should be scared or not. And I guess that's how I feel when I listen to this record, which is definitely going for a psych-punk thing but more '80s—think Devo instead of The Faint. Yeah, I think scary Devo is where I'll leave it. —Theresa W. (Vanilla Box)

RAGING NATHANS, THE

/PIZZATRAMP: *Split: 7"*

The Raging Nathans side of this split is definitely committed to bridging the classic punk and '80s metal vibe: straightforward, swear-laden, and drum-driven punk anthems with good oh-ohs but with some pretty ripping riffs thrown in. The Pizzatramp side, now that caught my attention. Heavy and gritty from South Wales trio, it's a little cleaner than the

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GLITTER - ANCIENT ROME LP

CRYBABY - DRAG ME UNDER LP

JOHN GALM - SKY OF NO STARS LP

CASSILIS - QUITTING LP

GUNK - GRADUAL SHOVE LP

1994! - FUCK IT LP

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SLOW WARM DEATH - S/T LP

YO MAN GO/SPRAYNARD - SPLIT 7"

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Sainte Catherines but with the same great gang vocals and completely cruddy bass. Super bonus points for a cover that has a sign that says "Fuck Trump, We Wanna Dance." —Theresa W. (Plasterer / Rad Girlfriend)

RAGING NATHANS, THE:

Sleeper Hits: Sordid Youth Vol. 1: LP

Been seeing this band's name around for yeaaaars, but always wrote them off as a Queers clone without ever hearing them. (I think it was the fact that they did a split the Nobodys that set that tone for me.) Anyway, I fucked up. These guys are great. Frenetic, catchy-as-hell pop punk with plenty of grit. They get in and get the fuck out. Decent lyrics and hooks that have no qualms about snaring you by the collar and dragging you around the room. This is an odds and ends collection gathering various 7", split, comp, and unreleased tracks. The liner notes are cool, and the main songwriter seems entirely unafraid of talking shit about specific folks, even his own bandmates, which is always interesting. Think early Screeching Weasel or Direct Hit without the glossy Fat production. I'm a fan. —Keith Rosson (Rad Girlfriend)

REPLY, THE:

The Complete Collection: 2 x LP

The Reply is not an outfit I had ever heard of until this crossed my path: a double album retrospective of a Washington D.C. band from

the '80s. It features a strong street attitude and a clear love for Paul Weller's work with The Jam and The Style Council. Although musically it lacks the bite of the former, the lyrics highlight a band railing against injustices and fighting for causes, as The Jam did. I lose a bit of interest when the songs become a bit more polished and smooth, but overall I found this to be a pleasant surprise. Although this is on Reply Records, it is available via Dischord Direct. —Rich Cocksedge (Replay)

RIGOROUS INSTITUTION:

Penitent: 7"

I hadn't listened to crust punk in a minute before putting on Rigorous Institution, and the dirty dramatics of it were like a time machine back to the ol' train yard. There are some really catchy, surprising vocal patterns and the synth adds an atmospheric layer to the tracks. This record is really solid, and I immediately went down a Dystopia wormhole after listening to it a couple times through. —Liz Jones (Black Water, blackwaterpdx@gmail.com, blackwaterpdx.com)

RITUAL CLEARING: Self-titled: CS

I bought this tape because Brian from They And The Children is in this band and I trust his musical sensibilities very deeply. The first few minutes of this tape, I thought, "Yep, this is exactly what I expected" in a very self-satisfied

way because it's a truly punishing tape. But it's also very surprising in some ways, for sure leaning on that USBM genre that has clearly been one of the central ways of describing the band but also with some really deep New England hardcore influences. What's truly amazing is that the shortest song on here is over five minutes—the rest are above seven. I have no ability to understand the absolute stamina that this takes and I am so stoked to see it. Will be in heavy rotation. —Theresa W. (Eternal Death)

ROB MOSS AND SKIN TIGHT SKIN:

We've Come Back to Rock 'N' Roll: CD

Straight-ahead rock with no chaser is what you have on this album. The vocals remind me of Lou Reed and Johnny Thunders at certain times. With titles like "Got My Ass Stuck in a Tree," the lyrical content will make you smile. "Life at 33 1/2 RPM" is a song most of us can relate to and Rob gives a shout out to his favorites at the fade out. Playing in Artificial Peace and Government Issue must have left him with a hefty Rolodex, as the guest players are impressive. Members of Scream, The Slickee Boys, and Generation X make an appearance to name a few. Solid playing and memorable songs add up to a cool record, so grab it fast! —Sean Koepenick (Rock On, Skin-tight-rock.bandcamp.com)

SCANERS, THE:

X Ray Glasses: On: 7"

I've been into these French synth punks for a while now. Cool and catchy, they comfortably exist in the same universe as bands such as Mind Spiders and The Epoxies with their other worldly digital aspects, but they can still effortlessly slap down a blown-out, guitar-driven punk rock song with the best of them. I always keep on the lookout for new releases, and they have yet to disappoint me. —Ty Stranglehold (Spaghetti Town)

SCATTER BRAINZ:

Board 2 Death: CD

C-grade skater punk. I think they're shooting for a cross between Circle Jerks, street punk, and a slowed-down D.R.I. but don't pull off any real well. The vocals are stilted and half-spoken, half-yelled. I will say I loved they included a sound clip of Will Smith from *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* on their song "Dead Beat Dad." That was pretty awesome and funny. Otherwise, there's not really a lot to work with here. —Kurt Morris (Self-released, theskatterbrainz.bandcamp.com)

SEWER RATS, THE:

Magic Summer: LP/CD

This came along just at the right time for me. The lockdown here in the U.K. was five weeks in and the whole working from home and not getting out much was starting to get

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me down. However, from the get go *Magic Summer* lifted me out it my funk with a dozen tunes which made me consider The Sewer Rats to be the German equivalent of The Copyrights. Melodies were flying thick and fast as the songs bounced along, providing an album laced with energy. This was just the fillip I needed and it continues to bring a smile to my face. One more thing to note is that this album has three songs with titles beginning with "I Don't Wanna," so there are also Ramones influences along the way. —Rich Cocksedge (Disconnect Disconnect, disconnectdisconnectrecords. bigcartel.com)

SHANTIN SHANTI! *Someone, Anyone?: LP*

Mellow mélange of lysergic '60s pop and garage rock with hints of doo wop and maybe even a little pilfered from the poppier wing of no wave. Tunes are simple yet sophisticated, artsy yet direct, and very catchy. Thumbs way up here. —Jimmy Alvarado (Wild Honey, facebook.com/wildhoneyrecords)

SIDEWALK FURNITURE: *Reimagined Thrill: CD*

My copy of this CD came with a cut-and-paste zine with the lyrics, which is a neat addition. This four-piece North Carolina band has a number of songs about sci-fi stuff like Star Trek and Star Wars

("Stormtrooper," "Jadzia," "Red Shirt Death"). There's also a song about their distaste for wearing bras ("Tits Out"). The first time I listened to the song I wasn't paying attention but the chorus is "No B-R-A! No B-R-A!" on repeat. And I thought they had a problem with the Boston Redevelopment Authority and I was like, "Right on! I'm sick of how they've screwed over poor people looking for affordable housing!" Then I read the song title and felt dumb. The general sound is a mix of the Breeders meets garage rock meets occasional folk rock. I never really thought I'd enjoy sci-fi related music but this is well done and sincere (both with the music and the lyrics). —Kurt Morris (Self-released, sidewalkfurniture.com)

SKYTIGERS: *Eulogy: LP*

SkyTigers has apparently been around for a nearly a decade, but just released this, their debut album. With crossover and thrash at a relative zenith (see: Power Trip, Iron Reagan), the wait was probably worth it. What separates this excellent record from other crossover bands is the variety. I mean, while D.R.I. holds a deserved place in the hardcore/metal pantheon, their records are (generally speaking) singular statements of speed. SkyTigers employ the mid-tempo chug just as often as the over-caffeinated speedy insanity. With socially conscious lyrics and a

punk/hardcore-style vocal delivery that marries perfectly to the thrash riffs, I'd recommend this slab to anyone who digs a little metal in their punk or punk in their metal. They also win song title of the month: "Keep Christ in Christmas (And out of Rock'n'Roll)." —Chad Williams (Sound Investment, soundinvestmentrecords. bandcamp.com)

SNUFF: *The Wrath of Thoth: 12"EP*

Originally intended to be a tour release, Covid-19 scuppered those plans and it turned into a more widely available record. I find Snuff to be a hit and miss band, so I'm never sure how I will get on with its releases, but this one is definitely going down as a hit. Featuring seven tracks, it just does what Snuff does best when it is on form in that it entertains, throws in an oddity here and there, and employs the occasional keyboards. A good, solid release and I'm looking forward to seeing Snuff on the rearranged tour early in 2021. —Rich Cocksedge (10 Past 12, snuffband.com / Unless You Try, unlessyoutryrecords.com)

SOCK-TIGHT: *Smudge: LP*

Sock-Tight is what happens when Mike Watt's unique bass playing gets combined with visual artist Raymond Pettibon's free-verse, stream-of-consciousness ramblings. And yes, I'm referring to that Raymond Pettibon, who did album

art for Black Flag and Sonic Youth, amongst many others. He did the art for this 12", too. In addition to the tight bass and the vocals by Pettibon, there's drumming and interspersed saxophone, similar to stuff one might find on old Stooges releases. With song titles like "Humbucker Fucker," "The Road to Go Slow" and "Who Tattled Told," it shouldn't surprise you to learn that the nine songs are like if a free-jazz band that also listened to punk was fronted by a beatnik poet. However, all of these tracks were on their previous 7" releases, but there are also two additional tracks on *Smudge*. This is interesting work. It has a funky, weird vibe at times but I'm not sure it's something I could listen to repeatedly. —Kurt Morris (Org, orgmusic.com)

SOCK-TIGHT: *Smudge: LP*

An all-star lineup of players familiar to anyone down with the San Pedro scene, with heavy hitters like Dirk Vandenberg from Tragicomedy, Jerry Trebotic from the Secondmen, and some dude named Steve MacKay from the Stooges laying down blorpy free jazz-y sounds with Mike Watt on bass and Ray Pettibon spinnin' on top. Unexpected turns abound, lyrical and otherwise. It sounds like everyone involved had a blast. Far out, man! —Michael T. Fournier (Org, orgmusic.com)



SOCK-TIGHT: *Smudge*: LP

Sock-Tight is the musical collaboration of thee Mike Watt and Raymond Pettibon, with guest appearances from folks like Steve Mackay, Jerry Trebotic, and Dirk Vandenberg. The results are a mixed bag. The musicians do their thing while Pettibon does his spiel over it. Ever wonder what some of his art with the heavy dialogs would sound like if they were laid down to music? Well, it kind of happens here. It's kind of like a modern beatnik performance. I'm also reminded of what Calvin Johnson does with Dub Narcotic Sound. —Matt Average (Org, info@orgmusic.com, orgmusic.com)

SOUL GLO: *The N In Me Is Me*: CS

Soul Glo manage to move from art hardcore, to noise, to lo fi, to rap, to grind, to sludge, and back to hardcore seamlessly. At moments I can hear poetry and rage and processing, sometimes I can't understand anything except the feelings of angst, stress, release, contemplation, and what I can only theorize as the feeling of being in a pit filled fully with anticipation for movement, having it bubble up inside of you, not knowing what is on the other side of it. I wish I had the lyrics, but maybe they're not for me—and that's okay. I refuse to put words in their mouth. I sit with these feelings and riffs and

sonic collages that carry so much. I listen again. This tape is incredible. —Candace Hansen (SRA)

**STATIC STATIC:
The Future Is Dark: LP**

Static Static's first album was a bit more of a guitar affair. Here they are letting loose a lot of keyboard electricity into the atmosphere and have created thoughtful levels of electronic synth punk. No matter what's going on, the album has a solid hum. Each song has ambience resonating in your skull regardless of speed. It creates a fuzz haze you'll be glad to stick your head into. If you're a fan of Digital Leather, this is a good album to consider. It's an excellent soundtrack for arriving home late after avoiding trouble or contemplating the many storms of Jupiter. In other words, late-night music. I think you know what I mean by that. —Billups Allen (Space Taker, space-taker.com)

**STEVE ADAMYK BAND:
Self-titled: 7" EP**

Five great tracks of punky power pop crammed into a 45. They have the sound down pat, delivering well-crafted and executed tunes that fit snugly within the modern interpretation of the genre without sounding hackneyed. No small feat, that. I especially dig the closer, "Take It to the Top (Fast Version)," which felt particularly anthemic and sounds

like it would be a highlight live. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rad Girlfriend)

**SUICIDE MACHINES, THE:
Revolution Spring: CD**

My experience with this band is somewhat limited. I have their record from 2000 mainly because a pal worked at Disney and that CD was on Hollywood Records. I was hoping that the ska guitar flourishes would be kept to a minimum on this record. Unfortunately, it looks like they wanted to impress their producer who is in Less Than Jake. This is, however, punk with a conscience. One song is about police brutality and another is about the horrible water in Flint, Michigan. So kudos on that front but that doesn't mean I'm going to start skanking this week. —Sean Koepenick (Fat Wreck, fatwreck.com)

TOMMY RAY!: *First Hits Free*: CD

From the first thirty seconds I was thinking this reminded me of the band The Cry from Portland, Ore. with that post-Exploding Hearts, power pop, glammie kind of sound. Minimal online research shows that this is in fact a solo record from a member of that band. There are surprisingly strong songs on display here with a great mid-fi recording quality. Most who try this style fall flat on their face, so it is always nice to see it done well. Fans of the Biters, Tranzmitors, or

Gentleman Jesse will find a whole lot to like here. —Mike Frame (Kool Kat Muzik)

TONOTA 80: *Everybody's Famous*: CD

Well, well, well, this is one of those albums that comes from nowhere and which you end up falling in love with. At least that's what happened to me. I must admit, when it dropped thorough the letterbox, I opened it and set it aside for a week or so before finally getting around to listening to it. The result was me quickly getting hooked on the late-'80s, early-'90s indie rock vibe which occasionally brought to mind Hüsker Dü as well as Moving Targets. The recording even has a quality that harkens back to those times, which adds to the quality of the release. If, like me, you enjoy music from that era—which is well written and performed, sounds good, and has strong, catchy melodies—then this trio should be for you. —Rich Cocksedge (Moving Change, johnniestrooka@hotmail.com, tonota80.bandcamp.com)

TOTAL REJECTS: *Self-titled*: LP

Deliberately sleazy and trashy punk rock from Russia. On par with bands like Brutal Knights, Catburglars, and Buck Biloxi And The Fucks but if I'm being honest all those bands do it much, much better. —Juan Espinosa (Slovenly, slovenly.bandcamp.com, totalrejects.bandcamp.com)

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TRAMP FOR THE LORD:**Black Cows and Slowpokes: CD**

This is a new project from Hangmen bassist Doug Cox and sounds very mid-'80s Los Angeles to these ears. Tramp For The Lord could easily have been on a bill at Raji's with Tex And The Horseheads or Lazy Cowgirls and held their own. There is a little of that post-Radio Birdman dark Australian sound in this as well—the later Hitmen DTK stuff or something along those lines—maybe some Jacobites vibes too. Some might call this cowpunk, but it is really just slower to mid-tempo troubadour sounds with some country influence. Strong songwriting and good production make for a fine listen. Would love to hear a full-length album by this band! —Mike Frame (Self-released, trampforthelord.bandcamp.com)

UK GOLD: Epigram No. 2: 12" EP

Post-punk herky-jerky type stuff, but the rhythms are a touch more punchy and the tone more rugged than most. Sort of sounding like a less sophisticated Moving Units. The guitar is noisy and wailing at times, while the bass and drums are controlled and focused. Some songs could use some editing, or be altogether excised from the set ("TWA" for example). They're at their strongest with songs like "Do It Again," which has a driving tempo and strong tension. —Matt Average (UK Gold)

UNCOMMITTED, THE: Self-titled: LP

Largely short, straightforward, trashy hardcore with some interesting instrumentation (is that a steel guitar in there?) and great song titles like "If Czolgosz Was an Onanist." Sound quality is a step above, say, a decent '80s demo—kinda boxy but everything is clear and accentuates the songs' drive. Singer was in "Hayseed Hardcore" legends Sons Of Ishmael and it sounds like he hasn't settled down a whit. —Jimmy Alvarado (Never Met A Stranger, nevermetastranger.org)

UNIT F: Human Zoo: CDEP

Orange County's Unit F was about to return with another full-length when they experienced a tumultuous lineup change. These four songs are the last that were recorded with their most-recent players before the recent shift. As always, they play mid-tempo, well-produced, anthem-laden punk. The vocalist adds some gruffness this time, which mixes well with his morose Larry Damore stylings that his fans are accustomed to. Hopefully Unit F forges on with its new makeup, as these tracks demonstrate a healthy ability to evolve. —Art Ettinger (Self-released, unitfmusic.com)

UZI: Cadena de Odio: LP

Caustic and catchy slam-punk from Colombia. *City Baby Attacked by Rats* re-charged for a new era of disenfranchised and increasingly

volatile youth. The perfect soundtrack for flipping cop cars over, also featuring a member of hardcore heavyweights Muro. What more do you need to know? Get this! —Juan Espinosa (Mierda Mierda Mierda, discosmmm.com / uzipunkbogota.bandcamp.com)

VANITY: "Rarely Ever" b/w "We're Friends": 7"

A great single that jangles along with a fuzzy pop tone like the Nerves. This sounds like the results of getting in the garage and jamming out songs with your friends over some beers and some smokes. Nothing new, just a classic can of Pabst, a Levi's jacket, a dirty black T-shirt, and an old pair of Chucks. Dirty rock'n'roll that's probably a blast to see live. —Ryan Nichols (Beach Impediment, beachimpediment@gmail.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:**Lagniappe Sessions, Vol. 2: LP**

A record of some of the best installments from Aquarium Drunkard's "Lagniappe Sessions," this was a great gift that showed up with my review materials this round. Living up to the sentiment of the title "lagniappe" which means "an extra or unexpected gift or benefit," this was a great way to spend a Sunday. From the first note of Six Organs Of Admittance's haunting cover of Melvins' "Night Goats" to Scott Hirsch's longing cover of

Dire Straits' "So Far Away" (one of my all-time favorites), this record will be such a clutch summer bank for me. Even though it's thirteen different artists singing songs from thirteen other artists across a huge range of style, there is something cohesive about the record. It's each of these songs stripped down to their most emotional core and it's fucking gorgeous. —Theresa W. (Org / Aquarium Drunkard)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:**Punx to the Bone #7: 7" EP**

Tight international hardcore comp featuring Enemigxs Del Enemigo, Radical Fun Time, Anticitizen, Terror System, Born Sick, Oi! Koholix, xBadsystemx, Escape From The Zoo, Social Conflict, and Battle Royale. Things, of course, lean heavily on the thrash and grindy ends of the pool. My personal Pick to Click is E.L.A.'s Social Conflict—yes, I'm definitely biased—but all the bands play some solid tunes that make this a keeper top to bottom. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dilapidated, dilapidatedmusic@gmail.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:**Punx to the Bone: #7: 7" EP**

Ten bands on a 7"! This is like the old days. This is clearly international, but there is no insert with lyrics or info, which is crucial to such a varied compilation. For the most part, it's super DIY hardcore that



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you would see in a basement in São Paulo or Minneapolis or back in the NYC Squat or Rot days. Lots of spiky letters and anarchy signs. I totally support DIY ethics and hands across the globe and all that punk stuff, but this was a tough listen as it was all over the place with very little context. Some bands I dug: Social Conflict, Anticitizen, and Oi! Koholix. —Tim Brooks (Dilapidated, Dilapidatedmusic@gmail.com)

VÄRLDEN BRINNEN: *Vi Åger Natten!*: LP

This record is the second full-length from the female-fronted Swedish band Värdlen Brinner. Slick production and packaging mask the near-blandness of these songs that end up working, strictly due to the stellar vocalist. The lyrics are in Swedish and they aren't translated on the sleeve. I had fun imagining what the songs are about. When a singer's voice is as strong as Värdlen Brinner's, not much else matters. —Art Ettinger (ViciSolum, viciisolum.com)

VIBRATORS, THE: *Hunting for You!*: LP

Well, I had to look this up, but it turns out this is the long-tenured London band's tenth album, and was originally released in 1994—the exact midpoint between this year and the release year of *Pure Mania*. Like a lot of folks, I find the band's second album, *V2*, to be a reasonably guilt-free Vibrators

jumping-off point: They were out of commission for a year or two after that, and, upon reassembly, they never really got back that "classic" Vibrators sound—the snotty vocals, the two tinny rhythm guitars playing off of each other from the left and right channels, the sped-up pub rock rhythm section—that I loved. This is not to say that records #3 thru #Infinity were wholly lacking in charm, but, at the end of the day, this is the tenth album by a twenty-one album band that most of us stopped seriously following nineteen albums ago. What am I supposed to say about it to interest you? "Compares favorably to their ninth, twelfth, and eighteenth albums?" That said, the record is reasonably enjoyable: While 1994 was close enough to the late '80s that you can hear residual remnants of Guns N' Roses envy (or at least see it in the hair), a boppy, ridiculous tune like "Keep Away from Me" will always find a place in my heart, so ultimately it's a net positive that this is now on vinyl for the first time. I'm virtually certain this is better than the tenth U.K. Subs album! BEST SONG: "Keep Away from Me." BEST SONG TITLE: "Radium City." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Please Please Please" is not the James Brown song, "No No No" is not the Generation X song, "Hey Hey" is not the Descendents song. —Rev. Norb (PHR, phr.cz)

VICE DEVICE: *Living Textures*: LP

Satisfying darkwave/goth stuff with layers of synths, male and female vocals, and hints of krautrock and industrial. The arrangements, which evolve nicely through the best songs, add nuance and a sense of motion that keeps me swimming through the darkness. —Chris Terry (Black Water)

VISION QUEST: *Bear Witness*: 7"

Despite being a local band to me (Plymouth, U.K.) I've only seen Vision Quest twice, but both times I've been mightily impressed by the energy the band has. I got exhausted just watching vocalist Sam as she prowled and stomped around the stage, yelling into the mic as she went. The band blends a straightforward hardcore sound with some NYHC influences and the clean, razor-sharp guitar dictates proceedings extremely well. Being the fussy bugger that I am, this is a style that really needs to be bang on for me to enjoy it. Thankfully, all five tracks meet my exacting requirements. This really is a good record. —Rich Cocksedge (Crew Cuts, crewcutsrecords.limitedrun.com / Blind Rage, blindragerecords.limitedrun.com / Angry & Hungry, angryxhungry@gmail.com, angryxhungry.limitedrun.com)

WARCHILD:

Control of Atomic Power: 7" EP

Umeå unleashes yet another doozy of a hardcore band upon the world. The

Discharge influence is very much in evidence throughout the four songs here, but the songs are built on strong riffs that are given even more heft by a punchy production. Three thrashers, one brooder, and not a crummy tune in sight. —Jimmy Alvarado (Black Water)

WARCHILD: *No Victory in Death*: 7"

Warchild sounds exactly like what you would expect a Swedish hardcore band named Warchild to sound like: anti-war lyrics and some tried and true hardcore formulas. It didn't offer up anything new and surprising, but it was pretty solid, nonetheless. —Liz Jones (Black Water, blackwaterpdx@gmail.com, blackwaterpdx.com)

WEIRD NIGHT:

This Is Weird Night: LP

I don't know if this is observable to the locals, but, to any reasonably seasoned observer sufficiently removed from Orange County, most bands from there are almost immediately identifiable by their sound. It's a geographic tell, somewhat like a Boston accent but with eighth notes on the ride cymbals. *This band*, however, I had no fricking clue where they were from. I had to look it up. Fullerton! There goes my career as a famous TV detective. They're kind of a weird concoction of what one might imagine would be mismatched parts: Keyboards whistling around in the background (the Screamers?



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The Last?), buzzy guitars smashing around in the mix (the Consumers?), high-pitched, reverby vocals (no clue who), harmonies that aren't really in tune (X, but not exactly), a general casting-about for meaning, purpose, and fulfillment (an all-grown-up version of M.I.A.'s *Notes From the Underground*) and a tenuous alliance between high art and rocking in the basement (the Urinals, most likely), and probably drugs (I know nothing). I found that I am able to successfully ignore this record for about half a side, but at that point I usually find myself intrigued enough that I start digging around for the lyric sheet, trying to pierce their odd veil of mystery. I dig it—either despite or because the band doesn't sound remotely O.C.-ish until "Health No More"—but, for the love of god, next time get someone who knows the difference between "to" and "too" and "your" and "you're" to look over your lyric sheet! *Razorcake* is nothing if not grammatically fastidious! **BEST SONG:** "Spoons." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Exponential Lover." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** The cover art made me think the name of the band was "This Is Weird Right." —Rev. Norb (Burger, burgerrecords.com)

WOODSMAN, THE: *Castle of Unrest*: CD

This is a five-song EP from this Welsh three-piece. It's guitar, vocals, and drums and they're heavy

with a mix of metal, industrial-metal, hardcore, and grunge. It can be catchy ("Buzz") or find a heavy groove ("Castle of Unrest"). Still, there's this element of immaturity in the sound. It reminds me of when I was in high school and some of the metal kids said they were going to create a "hardcore" band. Then they played our local shitty townie bars and all the rednecks thought they were pretty heavy and great and I was like, "Eh." I don't know how it works in Wales, though. Is that even an experience that's transferable? Whatever the case, I liked this well enough but there was this producer in me that heard things the band might do to make the music more interesting: variations on riffs, or changes in vocal tone. Maybe next time. —Kurt Morris (Smash Mouse, smashmouse.bandcamp.com)

WÜRM:

"Poison" b/w "Zero Sum": 7"

This 7" is the first new material from Würm in nearly forty years. Würm was started in 1973 by Ed Danky and Chuck Dukowski, the latter of whom would go on to join Black Flag. The lineup for this recording is all new compared to the band's time in the '70s and '80s, with the exception of Dukowski. "Poison" is a psychedelic sludge metal song while "Zero Sum" is a shorter, faster tune that's more punk influenced, more like if Black Sabbath met old

Black Flag. The two songs aren't blowing me away but this is still a solid release and a good listen. —Kurt Morris (Org, orgmusic.com)

WÜRM:

"Poison" b/w "Zero Sum": 7"

Chuck Dukowski's pre-Black Flag outfit is back with their first new songs in over forty years here. Heavy Sabbath-esque sludge with soaring, theatric vox—easy to get (pleasantly) stuck in this sonic quagmire. —Michael T. Fournier (Org, orgmusic.com)

YOUNG CANADIANS:

Hawaii: 12" EP

Holy shit. Was not expecting much, given the cover art, but was pleasantly surprised to discover that this was a reissue of a forty-year-old album. One listen told me that this one should be considered a stone cold classic. Four songs of Posh Boy-style punk that, I imagine, would've made them household names had they been from the States. Think *Rodney on the Roq* and *Beach Blvd.* comps, Neighborhoods, La Peste, Agent Orange. Snotty and effortlessly catchy and irreverent. Shit is so good. —Keith Rosson (Porterhouse)

ZUDASKRUST / PAROTID:

Desire of Destruction: Split: 7"

It's pretty cool that we can now get our hands on vinyl from Indonesian crust bands. In the olden days, it

was dusty old cassettes pressed on dust. This multi-label deal has longstanding crust merchants Zudaskrust murdering with their late-'80s UK Doom, Deviated Instinct crust coupled with the insane noise of Parotid. Parotid is a newer Malaysian band and has a current Japanese style—of bands like Zyanose or older Spanish legends Invasion—especially in the echoed vocals. Worth a squint if you haven't changed your jeans in six months and wear a leather jacket in summer. —Tim Brooks (Phobia, phobiarecords.net)

ZURICH CLOUD MOTORS:

Do More than Deconstruct-o: CS

This is a perfect project for cassette release, as folks who buy a lot of tapes prefer a wide mix of sounds to be coming at them at once. This band/project is all over the place, mixing a bunch of different styles into something that becomes experimental by default. Your average DIY cassette tape fan would almost certainly like this. —Mike Frame (Zazen Tapes, zazentapes.bandcamp.com)

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99 MM #44, \$5 or trade, 8½" x 5½", Risograph, printed, 20 pgs.

A zine highlighting graffiti and tags from all over the U.S. In this issue, Vanek (Japanther/Howardian) dishes out more photos of tags, cassette reviews, and a recipe for red lentil-pumpkin soup. There's an interview with graffiti artist Gen II where the questions are typed out and the answers are written by Gen II's own hand. It's pretty cool to see the a tagger write answers with their unique artistic style, even though it's illegible sometimes. The blue ink printing style is cool but I would be more stoked if the graffiti pages were in color, or at least posted on the Insta account. —Rick V. (ian vanek, p82a@yahoo.com, @9mm_zine)

ANALOG COMPANION, Vol. 4, \$10, 8½" x 5½", offset, 44 pgs.

If you're into skating, snowboarding, and hardcore than there's going to be something in this super slick zine for you. On snowboarding there's a story on Park Affair, a snowboard camp for women of all ages and skill levels and a reminiscent piece about teenage bonding on the slopes. As far as skateboarding goes there's a writeup on skater Taylor Clark. *Analog* also has interviews with Trevor Vaughan (The Colosseum recording studio, Wound Man, Brother) and Culture Abuse. There's a photo series on Have Heart and some record reviews, too. —Craven Rock (Analogcompanion.com)

CANNABINATION AUDIOZINE, trade, CD-R.

Flash Tabloid is a programmer at WGOT community radio in Gainesville who hosts a show that is, unsurprisingly, chiefly rants about marijuana, peppered with the occasional song. This CD-R, compiling shows 1-13, serves as an audiozine, or so I have been told. Flash Tabloid is the only non-corporate, non-business-oriented cannabis voice in Florida! Flash Tabloid wants you to get in tune with the earth and the soil! Flash Tabloid hates the oligarchy! Flash Tabloid wants *you* to trade and network with him! Flash Tabloid also did not provide a means of contact, but the back of the flyer says you can listen at 100.1 FM Sunday and Monday at 3:30 PM and Tuesday at 9 AM! Flash Tabloid is ready to take your call! *Flash Tabloid is THERE for YOU!* —Rev. Nørø (No address listed)

GETTING GET IN THE VAN, \$2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 24 pgs.

Hot on the heels of his previous literary smash, *John Cage: Autobiographical Facts About the American Composer*, this anonymous (unless I am really bad at paying attention) zinester created this slim opus in order to raise funds to pay for a new copy of the Henry Rollins memoir *Get in the Van*, which he had borrowed from his friend Jay and summarily lost. The book is now out of print and selling for like two hundred dollars, or so the story goes. And, while I rather enjoy this guy's dry-to-the-point-of-absurd humor, it's hard to imagine that there is a slavering, untapped market out there that is champing at the bit to toss this guy two bucks for a zine that takes about ten minutes to read, front-to-back (however, if you'd like a little taste of the merchandise, page four includes a review of Henry's duet with Cyndi Lauper and a description of the Häagen-Dazs where Rollins was the manager circa 1981. Page five features an etymology of the word "van," as well as a spurious email exchange between Henry and the author's friend Jay. *Order today!*). However, as the stated purpose of this publication is to replace Jay's copy of *Get in the Van*, we can cut out the middleman: Just send this guy two dollars, or a copy of the book if you have one you don't want, or a hot lead on a reasonably priced copy, and his Herculean labors will not have been in vain. He closes by teasing a sequel to *Getting Get in the Van*, and I, for one, welcome our new insect overlords. —Rev. Nørø (raincloudzine@gmail.com)

HERE'S WHAT I'VE HIDDEN UNDER MY TONGUE #2, free, 4½" x 5½", copied, 30pgs.

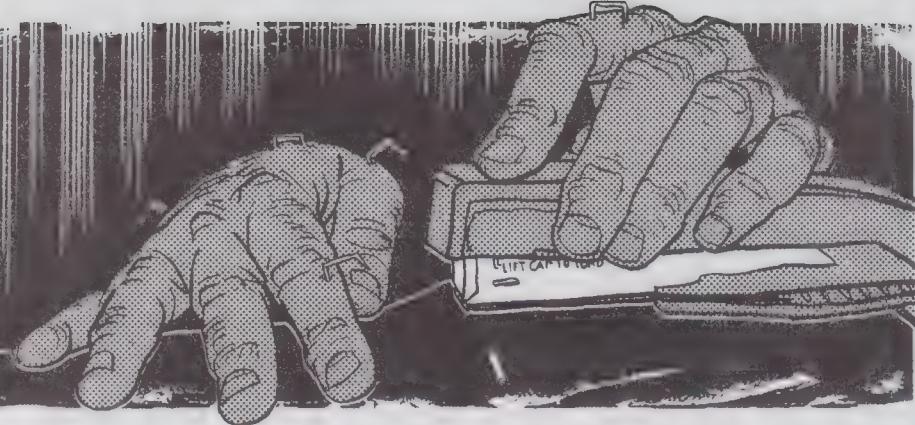
In the second installment of *Here's What I've Hidden under My Tongue*, the anonymous author talks more in-depth about the numerous psychiatric hospitalizations they alluded to having in the first issue. Having been hospitalized eight times between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, the author relates that these periods were not just small parts that shaped their youth. "This was my growing up," they write. They briefly talk about the stigma of mental health, and how hospitalization specifically, and mental health struggles in general are a secret people are taught to be ashamed of. The time the author spent in mental health facilities "...helped shape every facet of who I am. And yet it's something I rarely talk about," noting the reason to not discuss it publicly is because "There is too much stigma." What follows is a series of scenes from the author's personal experiences, contrasted with the depictions of mental illness and psychiatric hospitals in American pop culture. The author talks about the fascination we have for these institutions, our desires to understand and experience what goes on inside, and attempts to shed light on it from their own personal experiences. "The answers are interesting. They're just not sexy," they write. They then describe at length their first hospitalization, the experience closest to "the Hollywood madhouse," depicted in pop culture. In a ward of all teens, the narrator struggles to fit in as the new admission. Where *Here's What I've Hidden under My Tongue* succeeds is in its blunt honesty, and this issue focusing on mental illness is no exception. —Paul J. Comeau (D.J.T., 103 N Bliss St, Apt B, Anchorage, AK 99508)

HERE'S WHAT I'VE HIDDEN UNDER MY TONGUE #3, free, 4½" x 5½", copied, 30pgs.

The third issue of *Here's What I've Hidden under My Tongue* comes after nearly a nine-year hiatus since the first two issues. The author addresses their long silence in the opening to this issue by recalling what they'd written in the intro to the first issue. "When I started this zine, I said it was about the things which I might have simply swallowed, allowing them to eat at me from the inside... I said the moment had come to spit them out. And I meant it. And then the moment passed," they write. They then commenced "looking for the voice that I'd forgotten was mine to use." The author has indeed found their voice, and this issue is possibly the most intense yet. It's about grief, and particularly, the grief at the loss of the author's best friend. "Her absence is like the sky, spread over everything," they write, quoting C.S. Lewis. This issue was the most poignant and relatable to me personally because grief is a universal condition that all of us experience at points in our lives, to which I feel any reader could relate. This has been my favorite issue yet, and I'm looking forward to more. —Paul J. Comeau (D.J.T., 103 N Bliss St, Apt B, Anchorage, AK 99508)

HERE'S WHAT I'VE HIDDEN UNDER MY TONGUE #4, free, 4½" x 5½", copied, 30pgs.

The fourth issue of *Here's What I've Hidden under My Tongue* addresses belief, primarily belief in one's self, but also believing in others. It's also a bit about having faith. In it, the author, who works in the medical field, relates having to attend a work conference at the children's hospital they were institutionalized at as an adolescent. "I never wanted to set foot in Children's again. I never thought I'd have to," they write. What happens next is the author building mental tools with the help of their therapist to take on the challenge of not only having to mentally revisit a troubling time in their life but having to physically return to the place where those painful memories originated. The author draws strength not only from the belief and support of their therapist, but also from their own internal strength. Describing their life's accomplishments thus far, the author writes: "each serves as an act of resistance, an unspoken fuck you



to everyone who told me I couldn't." There's something quintessentially punk rock about that attitude, and I think many readers will relate to the sentiment. As we follow the author facing down their demons, a stark realization occurs—that on its face seems obvious—but really hits home. "People are still in there," they write. "And when I reassure myself of my own present safety, I feel an acute sense of guilt for betraying all of those people who are still unsafe. Those are my people." It is here that this issue transitions into a call to arms and a rallying cry that kids trapped in the system need help, need advocacy. "...mental healthcare itself is not necessarily abusive... the problem is that it can also be deeply destructive," the author writes. "How can we see the difference before it's too late? How do we stop more kids from being hurt?" They ask. While this writer doesn't have that answer—and the author admits they, too, don't have solutions—this zine is certainly a good starting point to spark discussion. —Paul J. Comeau (D.J.T., 103 N Bliss St, Apt B, Anchorage, AK 99508)

LIGHT IN THE DARK #3, 8½" x 11", copied, 24 pgs.

To-the-point straightedge zine featuring interviews with Abuse Of Power, True Form, and One Step Closer, a collection of flyers and album covers designed by the zinester, and the most intriguing thing: a guide to a New Age-y youth crew offshoot called ospo-core. I wish there was a little more info on this hardcore subgenre, but I also appreciate the zine's quick, timeless, bullshit-free style. —Chris Terry (lightinthedarkxxx.bigcartel.com)

didn't listen. And now, finally, this issue arrives, and it's everything everyone's had said. M. Thorn has put together an absolutely gorgeous, bonkers issue, with amazing photographs throughout. I don't know if every issue has a focus on photographers like this one does: interviews with Teppei Miki, Michelle Olaya, and Jeka Arza focus on the craft and execution of punk photography. Sial, Jeremy Dean, and Anti-Cimex also get some time here. Please, don't be a dipshit like I was (am): do your future self a favor and seek this one out. —Michael T. Fournier (razorbladesandaspirin.bigcartel.com)

VIOLENT DAYS FANZINE #1, 8½" x 11", copied, 24 pgs.

Violent Days is based out of Florida and covers hardcore. Besides a few reviews and some reprinted illustrations by an Orlando artist named Amy Dorian, it consists mostly of interviews with bands (Zig-Zag, Deviant, Protocol) that I found engaging and insightful and kept my interest, in spite of not knowing who the hell any of these bands are. —Craven Rock (violentdaysfanzine.bigcartel.com, violentdaysfanzine@gmail.com)

ZISK #30, \$3, 8½" x 5½", copied, 54 pgs.

Zisk, "the baseball zine for people who hate baseball zines," celebrates its twentieth anniversary by dedicating the entire issue to a single, albeit important, article. "Dodger Blues: Eminent Doman and Broken Promises in Chavez Ravine," by one Todd Taylor of *Razorcake* (and before you start

Please, don't be a dipshit like I was (am): do your future self a favor and seek this one out.

—Michael T. Fournier | *Razorblades and Aspirin*

MINOR LEAGUES #10, £5, 8½" x 11", copied, 70 pgs.

Always a great day when this one shows up. Having completed his four-issue cycle "Where?", Simon does a nice job transitioning back to "regular" programming, whatever that means these days: reflections on an American road trip, an archivist's (amazing) rumination of some old correspondence found in a dumpster, thoughts on the virus, and comics. Always affable in tone, and consistently interesting, *Minor Leagues* remains crucial. —Michael T. Fournier (smoo.bigcartel.com)

PUNKSAROUND #10, \$4, 5½" x 8½", copied, 44 pgs.

This is my second issue of *Punksaround*—it's growing on me. The last issue I read was on veganism. This one is on zines: herein are interviews and ruminations with heavy hitters like Al Quint from *Suburban Voice*, Matt Thompson from *Fluke*, Aaron Cometbus, and Zine Gang Distro. Like the previous issue, the tone throughout is friendly and inclusive. Alex puts together a good read, well worth your time. —Michael T. Fournier (punksaround.bigcartel.com)

RAZORBLADES AND ASPIRIN #9, \$10, 8½" x 11", full color printed, 72 pgs.
I wouldn't really call this a zine—*Razorblades and Aspirin* is an incredibly slick, professional, full-color, full-on magazine, which I believe is produced by former *MRR* coordinator Mike Thorn. The whole shebang kicks off with a series of four short interviews with punk/hardcore photographers from around the world: Teppei Miki (Japan), Jeka Arza (Indonesia), Philip Monahan (Canada), and Michelle Olaya (Germany). This sets the tone appropriately, as the whole magazine is pretty photo-centric. There are also interviews with graphic artists Jeremy Dean and Alex Heir, audio engineer Liz Rose (924 Gilman), bands Sial (Singapore) and the Royal Hounds... Did I miss anyone? There's a fantastic history of Anti Cimex (a must-read!), and music and print reviews. I'll admit, the cover photo (some hardcore dudes doing their mosh poses and modeling their matching sportswear in the pit while the shirtless vocalist points and hardcore-jumps) rubbed me the wrong way at first. Looking beyond that, this zine looks fantastic, the layout is immaculate, and the content is unique and top-notch. —Buddha (Razorblades and Aspirin, PO Box 23173, Richmond, VA 23223, razorbladesandaspirin@gmail.com)

RAZORBLADES AND ASPIRIN #9, \$10, 8½" x 11", printed, 68 pgs.

I heard. That's the thing that bums me out—every time this zine has been mentioned, every single time, there have been nothing but accolades. And I

howling "conflict of interest," trust that I would've personally told Todd if I thought the piece wasn't up to snuff, and he would've wanted me to. He's family, and sometimes family has to have some tough convos... but not in this instance), recounts the tale of how Dodger Stadium came to be perched on a hill overlooking downtown Los Angeles. Starting from the earliest historical references to an area previously known as Stone Quarry Hills, and ending at its current appellation "Dodgertown," which has its own fucking zip code and zero population, the story is one of how a city destroyed a cluster of barrios dating back more than a century and ham-fistedly displaced residents via greed, graft, grift, not-so-subtle racism and aided, oddly enough, by some misguided good intentions to make way for the use of public land by a private "entertainment" company. It's heavy, complicated subject matter, to be sure, but it's told deftly, balancing some seriously deep research with keeping things focused and direct, and even ends with a suggestion on a way to make amends for all the trauma caused, however late or small they may be. I'm sure Dodger fans will groan and complain, but it's nonetheless an important story, one not only about baseball, but also of how the wealthy can do anything to get what they want in a city that too often has no respect for its own history and beauty. Tip of the beret to Todd for a job well done and to *Zisk* for getting the history out to a wider audience. —Jimmy Alvarado (*Zisk*, PO Box 469, Patterson, NY 12563)

ZISK #31, \$2, 8½" x 5½", copied, 60 pgs.

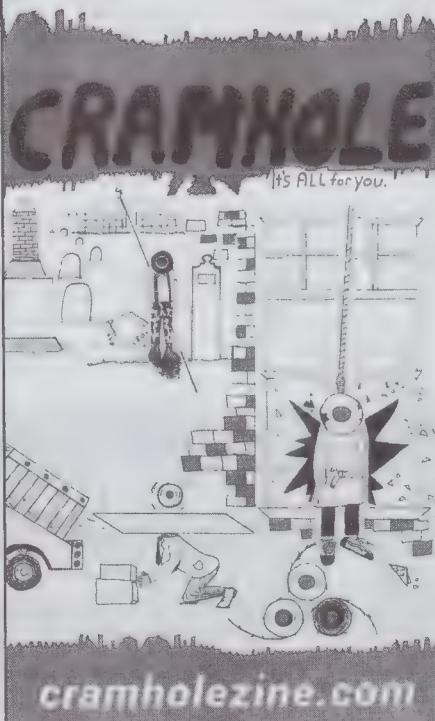
Holy cow! There's no shortage of fantastic stuff to read here: history, politics, personal musings, Bob fuckin' Dylan, beer, complaining/moaning/whining, and, most importantly, baseball. Some might grumble that a zine based on pro sports isn't exactly punk, and that's a reasonable argument. However, the *Zisk* staff (including a few names you might recognize from the pages of the very magazine you're reading right now) do a killer job of keeping things both substantial and entertaining. Unless you just hate baseball, you'll love this. Keep in mind: this zine weighs in at a hefty sixty pages and is almost entirely made up of text (with some sweet illustrations sparingly spaced throughout), so it might take approximately nine innings to read; if you do hate baseball, and you're stuck watching a game with friends, consider picking this up instead—you won't regret it, and it'll be good fodder for post-game shit-talking. —Buddha (PO Box 469, Patterson NY 12563, mikefaloona4@gmail.com)



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BOOK REVIEWS



Cheap Shots

By Chris Barrows, 144 pgs.

You probably know Chris Barrows as the vocalist of one of the best punk bands to ever come out of Florida (and that's saying a hell of a lot), The Pink Lincolns. His new book *Cheap Shots* delivers an immense and impressive collection of his minimalist band photography, mostly from the '80s and '90s, which includes bands like D.R.I., Redd Kross, The Damned, The Donnas, D.O.A., Los Crudos, Circle Jerks, MDC, and a ton more. With a completely different vibe than most books of

sometimes disgusting) place, and this shows, especially in the live and post-show band photos—a lot of fucked up, greasy hair and unusually dirty, sweat-stained clothing. As Ben Weasel says in the foreword: "Just be thankful it's not a scratch-n-sniff!"

Subject-wise, *Cheap Shots* sticks to bands, and there's a wide range of time periods, musical styles, and ultimate success levels represented here: Sonic Youth to Pork Dukes, and PiL to Roach Motel. There's a never-before-seen shot of U2 on their first U.S. tour playing to thirty people in an unspecified tiny space. Three photos of Jawbreaker in nearly identical poses from three chronological tours show the band members literally growing up before the reader's eyes from weird young punk kids into weird adults.

There is almost nothing in the way of text here (each photo has maybe a one-sentence caption), but in no way does that undermine the gravity of the content. *Cheap Shots* isn't just a killer punk rock photobook. It's also a vital rock'n'roll history document. —Buddha (Rare Bird Books, rarebirdlit.com)

I Have Everything I Need

By Bridget McGee Houchins, 457 pgs.

Ever wish you had a travel guide for punks? This would cover you for a large portion of Europe and America, while also giving you tips on packing light and traveling frugally in pretty much every setting. Houchins starts out the book with a solid introduction to herself and her traveling partner, now husband, Tim. She goes into her own past of growing up in Southern California a bit untethered and moving from place to place while still very young. It's easy to see that she, as well as Tim who has lived in a few squats, are quite comfortable being geographically fluid.

The first leg of travel is the pair's quite ambitious through-hike on the Pacific Crest Trail, a trail spanning from Campo, Calif. (just north of the U.S.-Mexico border), to Manning Park, British Columbia

Cheap Shots captures punk rock in its natural state: unedited, unwashed, and uncorrupted by the threat of mass appeal.

—Buddha | *Cheap Shots*

this genre, *Cheap Shots* captures punk rock in its natural state: unedited, unwashed, and uncorrupted by the threat of mass appeal.

The Pink Lincolns' brand of punk rock was perfectly stripped-down leaving the music to speak for itself, which it did in heaping helpings. In *Cheap Shots*, Barrows applies a similar philosophy to his photography. There are no fisheye lenses or blurred light effects. No digital bullshit. Barrows suggests in the notes that some of the photos were taken with old school point-and-shoot film cameras. Indeed, *Cheap Shots* is not a collection of glossy live pics of hip young bands taken on good hair days, with audience members thrusting fists in the air as the stage divers do their thing for the camera.

Instead, *Cheap Shots* exposes a very real day-to-day side of punk rock. A young Greg Ginn (Black Flag) is caught smiling and eating a slice of watermelon. Milo Aukerman (Descendents) doesn't look as much like a scientist here as he does someone you might consider suspect when your weed goes missing. Glenn Danzig (Misfits) doesn't resemble the ultra-intimidating rock'n'roll antichrist we know him as, rather a grinning dorky metal dude stoked to be on tour with his friends. There's no theme here, but it's obvious that the subjects throughout the book seem to have been captured with their guard down.

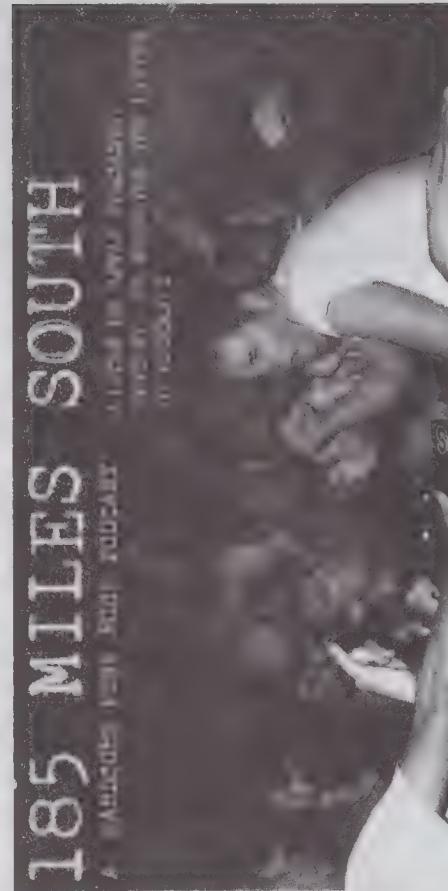
On a side note, the grimy dirtiness of punk rock tour life is in no way concealed in *Cheap Shots*. Florida is a hot and humid (and

just north of the U.S.-Canadian border. It's a mere 2,650 miles. They trained for this as much as they could and researched the hell out of what to expect.

While they sometimes relied on family (mostly Bridget's mom who lived in the area) to help resupply them with food and water, a quick check-in meal at a diner just off the freeway, or pick them up for the unfortunate event of her grandmother's funeral, they were always returned to the exact spot they'd left off so they could say they had hiked the whole thing. Sadly, but nothing less than impressive as hell, they had to stop at around three hundred miles due to an injury to Bridget's knee, but not before meeting tons of kind "trail angels" and experiencing "trail magic" along the way. Even though the two are heavily tattooed and dreadlocked punks, there was quite a sense of community among hikers.

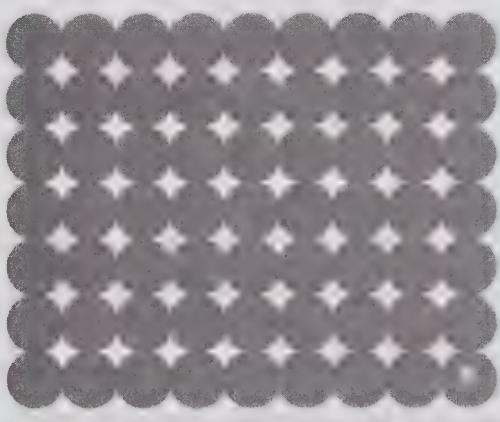
Once Bridget recovered, they started rabidly saving money in order to sustain themselves through half a year of travel. First they crossed the U.S. by hitchhiking, trains, sketchy ride shares, or buses in order to fly out of Philadelphia to London because it was cheaper than leaving from California.

On this awesome trip they visited twenty countries, rode flea market bicycles from Vienna, Austria to Budapest, Hungary (150 miles), saw a church full of bones in Évora, Portugal, drank inside



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castles in Edinburgh, Scotland, watched punk bands at a squat in Leipzig, Germany, got robbed in Patras, Greece, and so many other stories. They did it all by living on a punk budget, staying with friends and friendly strangers when needed, sleeping outside, on roofs, or in hostels, biking or walking whenever possible, and cutting off cell service, only using the WiFi for maps and travel booking. For the rest they relied on instinct and experience. I can't begin to express how engaging these slice of life stories are. It's like if Rick Steves had face tattoos and listened to Būmbklātt. —Kayla Greet (Self published)

Last Taxi Driver, The
By Lee Durkee, 232 pgs.

The Last Taxi Driver is a road novel, and the road is the streets of a fictional North Mississippi town called Gentry and surrounding areas, traveled by a cab driver named Lou, and, oh, the people you'll

Gibby did a lot of drugs! Zany! The Butthole Surfers were crazy!... Wait, why do I have so many questions?

—Michael T. Fournier | *Me & Mr. Cigar*

meet as you ride with him. It's Southern literature, and accordingly the characters are colorful and sometimes grotesque. However, where other great writers in that tradition, like Charles Portis, create worlds that, while not quite fantastic, are almost magically real, Lee Durkee's Gentry is rooted firmly in our America. The novel almost makes other fiction in that Southern tradition seem frivolous by comparison, though I don't know that this would have occurred to me in *Before Trump*.

To make a living as a cab driver in this small town requires long, hard hours, but it can be done because so many of Lou's passengers can't afford their own cars—but instead require someone else's car to get to their job. That was a constituency I'd forgotten about. On my bus commutes to work (before COVID-19), bus stops were frequently bedecked with cab company business cards, but I'm blessed with a 2.5-hour window of time to begin work. If I had a shift that started at this-time-only, my quality of life would drop a few floors. A 2.5-hour window is not something that would ever occur to most of Lou's passengers.

From the novel: *[I] haul a regular to work at the Winchester plant, which makes a type of bullet. Next I haul a waiter to Applebee's, which makes a type of food. After that I pick up my regular Leesha from her decrepit trailer park off Route 5. While in my car Leesha is invariably talking on her cell to someone who never says a word. Leesha manages at Burger King....*

During his twelve-to-fourteen hour shifts, Lou thinks a lot about the struggle to be a good person, to be kind, and Durkee regularly surprises the reader with Lou's decisions to be kind or not to be kind—or actually, Lou *decides* to be kind, and reflexively falls into the not-exactly-a-choice not to be kind. Kindness, Lou teaches us, requires vigilance, or we probably will forget to practice it. The encounter between Lou and his last passenger, in the last chapter, is essentially humanity encapsulated into one cab ride.

The novel is as lively as fiction gets (though having written that, I realize that I haven't really captured how dark the novel gets. One chapter is Lou's remembering what it was like to be a student in the '70s days of Mississippi desegregation busing, and horrific days they were). The audience that would love this book is large enough for ten printings or more. *The Last Taxi Driver* makes me wish that literature had the equivalent of Netflix's home screen, something that

could display the novel as prominently as Netflix displayed *Tiger in the Sewer*, or whatever it was called; fuck you. —Jim Woster (Tin House Books, tinhouse.com)

Life of Vice

By Robin Enrico, 88 pgs.

This is a collection of Enrico's *Life of Vice* comics that were self-published from 2009-2010. Becky Vice is an eye patch-wearing rocker, wrestler, sex columnist, and all-around icon. She lives a reclusive life trotting the globe doing these odd jobs wherever she can. Her story is told by Shelby, a somewhat reserved writer for an alternative magazine who jumps in the car with Becky on her way to Las Vegas to host a porn award show. While Shelby learns all about how Becky became the extremely scarred up, one-eyed celebrity, she also learns the art of lying and what kind of breakfast foods to eat

after a night of drinking. Their adventure through Vegas is over the top and NSFW reading.

Robin Enrico's style is their own. The characters are all very symmetrical with that vintage noodle-y limb style. There is an insane amount of detail added to every page. And just so you don't go cross-eyed trying to soak in every detail, a lot of the this-and-thats filling up the panels are labeled. Which gives this comic a lot of charm.

It's a quick and fun lil' read where you may find yourself restarting it a couple of days later. Just don't let the kid sitting next to you on the bus see it. (Alternative Comics, wowcool.com)

Me & Mr. Cigar

By Gibby Haynes, 245 pgs.

Oh, wow! A book by the guy from the Butthole Surfers! Whoa, those guys were crazy! They did a lot of drugs! Remember that time they had a shotgun and fired blanks into the audience? That was edgy! That's, like, *art* and shit! They're so provocative! Can you imagine if they had done that in the last five years instead of in 1991? Wait, weren't the Butthole Surfers that band that didn't think a 50/50 royalty split with Touch And Go Records was enough money? Don't bands on major labels get like thirteen percent royalties? Wait, the Butthole Surfers signed to a major, right? How did that work out? Didn't the Butthole Surfers take Corey Rusk to court? Why would they do that?

Wait, isn't this a book review?

Oh, hey, Gibby wrote a book for *teens*! Zany! Why does the first part of the book sound so choppy and unedited? Why does Larry Teeter's name change to Lytle Taylor and back? It's not because the editor couldn't make head or tail of some of this, right? And why do character's names and descriptions repeat over and over? Why are teens the imagined audience for this wooden prose?

Oh, hey, after the intro the narration changes from third person to first person! Literary! And the main character grows up to be a *drug dealer*! Zany! But the drugs are, like, designer and shit, so it's cool! And he promotes raves! Teens love stories about raves and MDMA deals, right? And the way the chapters are initially really short until the character *does drugs* and the chapter gets all long and impressionistic is very literary, am I right? Form following function and whatnot? Because this book for teens about a drug-dealing teen and psychedelia and a dog which gives birth to a weird zombie alien thing that chops

COLORADO CREW DENVOID PT.2

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off his sister's hand is *art* and shit, right? It's provocative and edgy! And intentional! Gibby did a lot of drugs! Zany! The Butthole Surfers were crazy! We have no reason to doubt this very intentional and zany story for teens, right?

Wait, why do I have so many questions? —Michael T. Fournier (Soho Teen, sohopress.com/sohoteen)

Drunk Punk: Getting Sober without Gods or Masters

By Tim Spock

A true story of someone who drank like a fish and ended up murdering two people when he drove his car, while drunk, into the Dancing in the Streets AIDS fundraiser in 2012. The first half of this zine details his descent into alcoholism, and the bad choices that ensued, culminating with him looking at twenty years in prison. While he's in prison he's worked on getting his shit together, and came up with his own program for getting sober without resorting to religion. Punk rock nihilism has a steep price—it's grim, dark, and ultimately sad. —Matt Average (Microcosm, 2752 N Williams Ave, Portland, OR 97227)

I really dug the way that Keith Rosson wrote magical realism in *Smoke City*—and, in *Road Seven*, I really dig the way that he shifts focus away from what I previously perceived as his biggest strength, towards realism minus the magic. The way that he focuses on interior monologues and on reckonings is no less impactful than his early stuff, and the way that he challenges himself to defy previous blueprints is a sign of growth. I enjoyed *Road Seven* for its story, its craft, and its confidence: it's a great read. I can't wait to see where Keith goes next. —Michael T. Fournier (Meerkat Press, meerkatpress.com)

Wallop

By Nathaniel Kennon Perkins, 107 pgs.

I read Nathaniel Kennon Perkins's two previous books, one a novel, and the other a collection of short stories. *Wallop* is another format for Perkins in which he explores a novella. Sure, 107 pages may seem a bit long for a novella but *Wallop* doesn't seem lengthy enough to be considered a novel. In addition, the satisfied feeling

The level of craft in Rosson's work is jaw-dropping. He makes writing gorgeous, elaborate structures look effortless.

—Michael T. Fournier | *Road Seven*

Road Seven

By Keith Rosson, 260 pgs.

Grad school is a funny place. There's always one student who can't get their act together. In *Road Seven*, it's Brian Schutt, a guy who is struggling to complete his dissertation—and to complete basic job requirements, like showing up to teach his classes. As *Road Seven* rolls on, we find out this is because of a brain tumor. But before Brian can properly process this horrible news, his friends send him a ha-ha job listing, which he applies for on a lark: Mark Sandoval is the world's most famous alien abductee. Everyone's seen the big-budget Hollywood film based on his life; everyone knows the weird system of scars the aliens left on his body after they kidnapped him. Sandoval has parlayed his abduction, and subsequent fame, into a book deal and a persona as a paranormal investigator. He needs a personal assistant to help with his newest inquiry: a woman on the island of Hvildarland, off the coast of Iceland, sent him a video of a unicorn.

Keith Rosson's most recent book *Smoke City* was my introduction to his stuff. In *Road Seven*, Rosson's hallmark prose style is again at the fore: dude writes some serious sentences and paragraphs. The level of craft in Rosson's work is jaw-dropping. He makes writing gorgeous, elaborate structures look effortless. Unlike *Smoke City*, though, *Road Seven* largely (but not entirely) tones down the magical realism of his previous effort. Sure, the book is nominally about alien abduction and unicorns—but there's much more to it. *Road Seven* is a book about identity: Schutt and Sandoval both grapple with metaphorical demons throughout, issues of mortality, self-worth, and perception exacerbated by assumed identities. Rosson emphasizes this by shifting perspectives relatively late in the book: by pivoting to Mark Sandoval's point of view late in the novel, the reader is jarred. Initially, I thought this late shift was an odd choice, but after some thought I think it complements the subplot involving what Rosson calls the *alagableutter*, the way that the forest on Hvildarland seems to bear down on the protagonists as they set up surveillance cameras to catch images of the illusive unicorn—and as they seek access to the United States military base on the island, still inexplicably manned after a period of intense activity during World War II.

I'm left with at the end of reading these pages is more akin to that of a hearty snack and not the satisfaction and fullness of a grandiose dinner which a novel can be.

That said; there's a lot in these pages to unpack. Over the course of less than a week, the male narrator finds out his girlfriend is pregnant, hitchhikes from his home in Denver to Kansas City to see a friend, takes part in an epic party, gets drunk and does drugs, and takes his girlfriend to get an abortion. Imagine a fictional version of life with Al Burian, a gutter punk, and Jack Kerouac all rolled into one. There's travel, basement shows, and excessive substance use. Unique characters abound.

Two of the themes of *Wallop* are hedonism and nihilism. One wonders if the narrator has any goals, hopes, or dreams in his life. However, behind those traits of self-indulgence, it's clear the narrator cares for others and is invested in living a joyful, exciting life. It's a dance I've seen many twenty and thirty-somethings try to figure out. We come away from it with memories and stories enough to fill books, whether they are memoirs or novels.

Wallop is certainly Perkins's strongest work, and his most engaging. From start to finish I didn't waver in my interest and found the characters both intriguing and funny. As Perkins's and my mutual friend, Bart Schaneman, said, "If you want to know what it feels like to be a young man making bad life choices in today's America, this is the book for you." It's safe to say many of us have made bad life choices. In that regard *Wallop* is relatable. That may seem as though it could lead to a depressing text, but there are glimmers of hope—that some good might result from a life with a little bit of change. There's also a possibility of a relationship with deep love that comes through these pages. That optimism and passion keep this book from being a depressing pile driver. —Kurt Morris (houseofvlad.tumblr.com)





VIDEO review

Straight Edge Kegger: Blu-ray

Written and directed by Jason Zink, *Straight Edge Kegger* is a shockingly good, micro-budgeted, coming-of-age subculture genre bender. From its professional look to its script and acting, it's one of those rare spot-on films that explode onto the underground, seemingly out of nowhere.

Straight Edge Kegger is the saga of a young man struggling with the violence and machismo of his scene. He befriends a different group of punks and ends up at a party. The party is invaded by his thuggish old friends, and all hell breaks loose.

Opening with a tribute to Abel Ferrara's classic *Driller Killer*, writer-director Zink acknowledges that he is not the world's first punk to make a feature. The first half of *Straight Edge Kegger* owes a lot to the 1990s. Stylistically, characters develop similarly to those in the best work by the likes of Jon Moritsugu, Gregg Araki, Sarah Jacobson, and Larry Clark. Those story tellers humanized wayward youth,

A sensitive, earnest, stunning entry into the hearty tradition of youth subculture films.

—Art Ettinger

treasuring the flair that iconoclastic kids intrinsically offer. This film taps into that vein adorably, as it creates odd moments of poignancy amidst what is essentially a setup for an action-packed denouement.

When the plot shifts to a violent standoff, *Straight Edge Kegger* becomes the picture that *Green Room* wanted to be. *Green Room* disappointed due to the métier of its director's prior film, *Blue Ruin*. Without pretense, *Straight Edge Kegger* tells a similar tale with a way greater degree of panache.

While the warmth and humor of the early section of *Straight Edge Kegger* is where its strengths shine brightest, the second act also impresses. Zink's compassion for his troubled characters is evident, and this is a project that tears down the barricade often surrounding ultra low-budget cinema. Unlike what is so often the case with micro-budgeted fare, *Straight Edge Kegger* always feels like a real movie.

Straight Edge Kegger is available on Blu-ray, DVD, and VHS. Many supplements are present, including a commentary track, deleted scenes, trailers, a behind-the-scenes documentary, and more.

While its brilliant title and campaign suggest a clever, campy endeavor, *Straight Edge Kegger* is anything but schlock. It's a sensitive, earnest, stunning entry into the hearty tradition of youth subculture films. I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone looking for a new take on their old friends. —Art Ettinger (Scream Team Releasing, screamteamreleasing.com)

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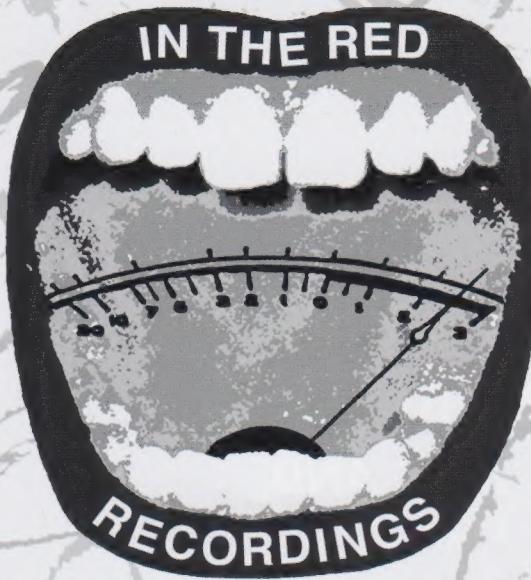
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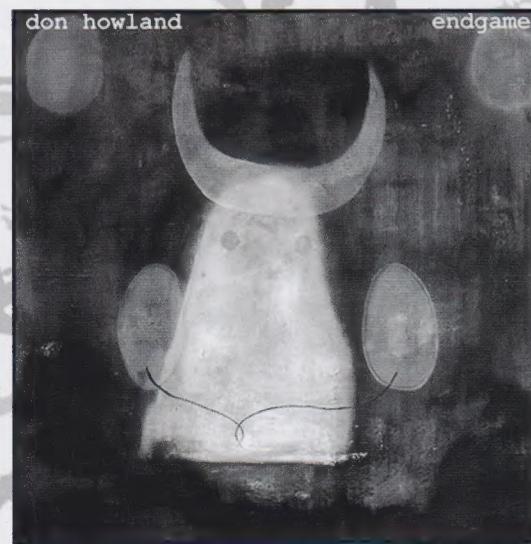
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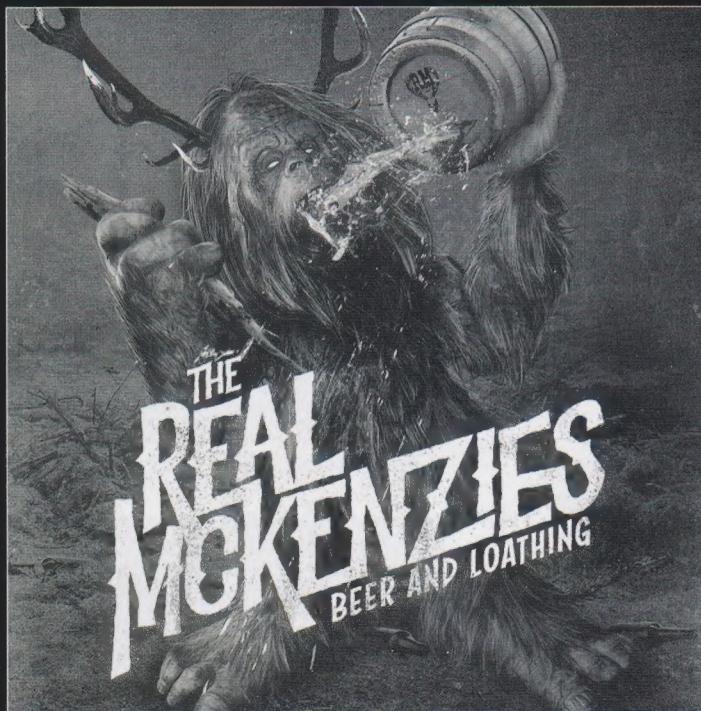
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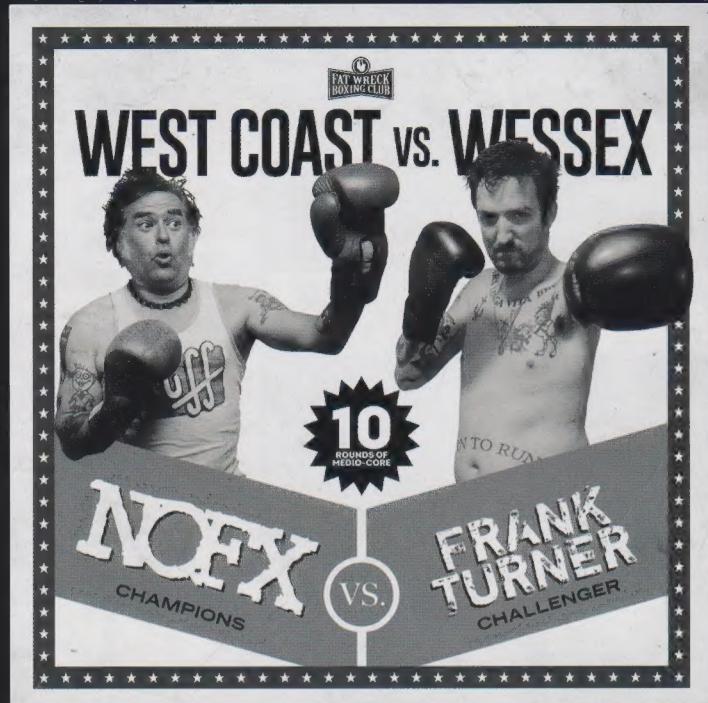


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